

THE  
INFLUENCE OF THE PRESS



R.A. SCOTT-JAMES



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## THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRESS.

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

PERSONALITY IN LITERATURE.

MODERNISM AND ROMANCE.

AN ENGLISHMAN IN IRELAND.

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# THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRESS

BY  
R. A. SCOTT-JAMES

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## PREFACE.

EVERY journalist will be able to pick holes in my argument and look for errors in my history. But he should not complain that the history is not exhaustive, for this book is not a history; nor that my description is incomplete, for to describe the Press is not my purpose. I have made no attempt to tell amusing stories of editors who have outwitted Cabinet Ministers, or correspondents who overheard the confidences of Sultans. Nor has it been my business to describe the manufacture of a newspaper, the routine duties of reporters and sub-editors, or the mysterious, intricate mechanism which only head printers understand. If I have said little, for example, about the London correspondents of provincial papers, it is not because I do not appreciate their importance, but because their special status is not relevant to my argument.

My aim has been to examine the function that is fulfilled by the Press at all times, and particularly the part that it plays in modern life. I have devoted several chapters to historical aspects of the Press,

## *PREFACE*

not with a view to presenting a continuous history, but to discover its function as revealed by history and the sort of obstacle which always confronts it. I am concerned with influences inside and outside the ranks of journalism which make the Press what it is and hinder it from being what it might be. I am as much concerned with readers as with writers ; with the opinions which make the Press as with the opinions which the Press makes.

There are a few living journalists whose work and influence I have found it convenient to mention, and many existing papers whose methods I have not hesitated to criticize. My object—if, in all humility, I may use so pretentious a word—is scientific ; and I have written nothing with invidious, or eulogistic, intention. The book is an attempt to get at some essential facts about the condition, influence and function of the Press, more especially in modern England and America.

My thanks are due to many American editors for the courtesy with which they have shown me over their great offices, explained their organization, and given me other invaluable information. If it should seem that I am repaying their kindness with ungrateful criticism, I can only say that many of them hold views identical with my own, and they knew that white-washing was no part of my intention.

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I owe still more to English journalists, but after more than ten years' practical and varied experience of journalism it would be difficult to trace my obligation to individuals; so I must not attribute to Mr. A. G. Gardiner, Mr. Robert Donald, Mr. H. W. Massingham, Mr. Austin Harrison, or other editors for whom I have worked, any responsibility for my opinions.



# THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRESS.

## CHAPTER I.

“PRESSED AND OVER-PRESSED.”

THE reading of newspapers has become a habit all over the civilized world. It is a habit which has communicated itself up and down the social scale, and has crept insidiously into the vitality of nations. The middle-class Englishman of the last generation who perused his *Times* or his *Morning Post*, and the respectable American who read his *Tribune* or his *New York Times* when it was still priced at four cents, were to be joined by the millions who had learnt to read and write and enjoy their favourite organ of sensation. And now almost every man in the most modestly assured position begins his day with a perusal of the morning paper. It is with the workman when he travels by train or tram to his work, and it is replaced by the evening paper when he returns. It has insinuated itself into our culture, affording us the new material upon which to exercise such ideas as we may possess. For most of us our knowledge of public life, our information about foreign affairs, domestic politics,

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new books, drama, finance and social scandal is drawn chiefly from the Press. If we wish to inform ourselves about the taxes which it has been decided we are to pay, the theatres or concert-halls we are to visit, the arrival of ships, the price of stocks and shares, the hours of sunset and sunrise, we have recourse to the columns of our paper. It is the medium of exchange by which the nation shares its information, its ideas, its corporate or incorporate feeling. A man acts upon it, and counts upon it more than he counts upon his friends. It is a constant companion, a perpetual irritant to his mind, and, perhaps, confirmier of his prepossessions. Its influence upon him is that of a nagging, unavoidable, but ingratiating associate, upon whose *bona fides* his very existence may depend.

We do not—most of us—give much thought to the matter. We accept the daily paper as a matter of course, just as we accept trains, and telegrams, and restaurants as a matter of course. In the matter of restaurants, it is true, we exercise some care ; food enters the body and has a speedy and noticeable effect upon our comfort and health, whereas the ideas which are thrust into the mind do not trouble us ; for the revolution of the world is taking place gradually, not suddenly and dramatically. Many persons display their only active feeling about the Press by expressions of contempt ; they consistently use it and abuse it ; their whole stock of current information is derived from it, but

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they continue to speak of the "Daily Liar," or to adopt the cynical attitude of Oscar Wilde :—

"There is much to be said in favour of modern journalism. By giving us the opinions of the uneducated, it keeps us in touch with the ignorance of the community. By carefully chronicling the current events of contemporary life, it shows us of what very little importance such events really are. By invariably discussing the unnecessary, it makes us understand what things are requisite for culture and what are not."

In influential and polite circles, it is true, insufferable indignities are no longer heaped upon representatives of the Press. In such circles the value of publicity has been discovered ; politicians are aware that the incessant patterning of ideas upon the heads of the public is like the patterning of rain which wears down rocks. To-day most men of letters are compelled also to be journalists ; statesmen write articles at the instigation of friendly editors, for the weekly if not often for the daily papers. (Mr. Lloyd George has contributed to the London *Nation*, and Mr. Roosevelt writes regularly for the New York *Outlook*.) Great ladies have discovered that they can extend the theatre of their patronage by honourable appeals to the Press for charity and funds. The knowing ones of the world have learnt that the Press is a manifold engine for moulding, controlling, reforming, degrading, cajoling, or coercing the public, whilst the great public reads its

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paper as it eats bread, without a thought of the mighty trick that is being played upon it.

Well or ill conducted, the modern Press, collectively considered, is the outward manifestation and index of the ruling forces and influences in a nation. No fact of the most trivial order can be stated without the suggestion of an idea, and the journals of the world represent those facts and ideas which can be thrust upon and made acceptable to the impressionable millions of the world. In the 'sixties and 'seventies of the last century, when the newspaper public in England consisted mainly of respectable fathers of middle-class families, the penny papers assumed their traditional shape, with long leading articles, views soberly and solidly set forth, and ample law reports which the young girl was not allowed to peruse. To-day the newspaper has again changed and is changing. It has been transformed according to the rapid transformation in the life of the nation. It is not only that efficient postal services, telegrams, telephones, marconigrams, quick trains and steamers have completely revolutionized the news service and the means of circulating papers, bringing the whole world into the area of the day's survey, and a vast public within range of the breakfast delivery. But also the social centre of gravity has shifted; democracy for the first time in history looms before us dominant and partially vocal in a nation-state; it can read; it can be addressed; it can reveal tastes.

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Universal education, though it be only elementary, is the hall-mark of modern democracy. Its profound effect upon civilization, for good or for ill, lay in the fact that *the masses were brought under the spell of the printed word*.

At the same time that the masses were thus exposed to the appeal of the journalist, they were also exposed to the exploitation of the man of business. We may deplore the poverty of the working classes and their disproportionate share in the wealth of the world, but the fact remains that the poorer members of the community are the most important spenders of money. For them and their infinite variety of needs the man of business caters. When we say that this is a commercial age we do not mean that the men of commerce are more greedy than their predecessors, but that there are more of them; that all our needs are satisfied through the medium of commerce; that our needs have multiplied; that the methods by which our tastes are studied and encouraged, by which we are enticed and cajoled by competing caterers with their various goods and blandishments, have become necessarily more evident and blatant owing to the fact that this community which is catered for is vast, scattered, various, incalculable and credulous. The producer does not know his consumer, so he trumpets his wares on the housetops in order to make contact with his special and scattered public.

The universal providers of the new commerce,

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the ingenious middlemen in search of a market, would indeed have been dull if they had not scented a new trail in the arrival of elementary education, and a public that could *read*. No matter *what* or *why* it read, no matter the quality or substance of the brain that could be affected by words—there was a public that could spell out words, that had tastes, appetites, passions, desires, even ambitions of its own, and, above all, half-pence to lose in the extravagant hope of attaining a new sensation. There were men and women—millions of them—who could read, millions of men and women mostly dissatisfied with the gift of life. What more inevitable than that commerce, in the natural course of its evolution, should find here a new outlet for activity, a new want, an aspiration if you like, which its ingenuity could satisfy—and with profit? It was inevitable. Alfred Harmsworth, with his half-penny Press, was no more than a brilliant instrument of Fate, the superb embodiment of the inexorable logic of fact. To Englishmen, drugged with the opiate of Victorian respectability, forgetful of the Yellow Press of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, he seemed to spring from nowhere, and to become a giant because he had recognized a simple fact about democracy. But America, in spite of a Puritanism more remarkable to-day than that of England, has never had a Victorian age. She has never had a Whig aristocracy, and her journalism has never

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known a John Walter or a Delane. Sober, respectable, and literary newspapers she has had, such as the old New York *Tribune* and the *Evening Post*, and the *Boston Transcript* to this day; but her most notable journalists have been brilliant gamblers like the first Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald*, or men like Joseph Pulitzer, of the New York *World*, who combined the organizing genius and the demagogic instinct of Harmsworth with an eagerness to support the democratic cause within the so-called Democratic party. The violence and sensationalism of the journalists who wrote under their ægis, had generally none of the earnestness which inspired the contributors to the *Massachusetts Spy* a century earlier; but the manner and tone were not wholly dissimilar. The American of to-day, in spite of admixtures from other races, is far more like the Englishman of two hundred years ago than the modern Englishman is like his ancestor. For the Englishman has passed under the social influence of the Whig aristocracy, and been profoundly affected by it—British snobbishness to-day exists as a survival of that largely baleful influence. Yet it was not an unwholesome influence so far as it affected the British newspaper, which lost the habit of personal abuse, invective, and sensationalism, and acquired a more sober tradition; whereas this habit was never lost in America. Never at any time were the majority of her newspapers written for a class

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similar to that of the sedate Victorian householder. Dickens may have exaggerated the sensational character of the American papers of the 'forties, but his strictures would not have been exaggerated had they been applied to the journals hawked about by English "mercuries" a hundred and fifty or two hundred years earlier—the very journals to which American newspapers must trace their origin, though the type disappeared in England. Gordon Bennett and Pulitzer took a material already to their hands ; the former adapted it to the new age of commerce, and discovered the vast potentialities of the commercial advertiser ; the latter realized the existence of a proletariat that could read, and the *World*, dividing the field with its rival the *Sun*, threw open its pages to the working-classes. In the early 'eighties a host of one-cent papers completed the change, and to-day most of the great American papers are sold at a cent in the cities where they are produced.

Nor must it be forgotten that the Americans have had to catch up two thousand years of civilization in a couple of centuries. They have necessarily moved quickly ; they have had to accustom themselves to lightning changes ; they may be said to encounter ten incidents to every one of the Englishman. During the thirty years after the Civil War they reached a stage in their industrial revolution which Englishmen only attained after a century sufficiently hurried and kaleidoscopic.

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Their commercial quickness discovered, in the un-educated man who could spell, a golden harvest for literate enterprise ; and instantly, the magical hand of the speculative millionaire conjured up a popular Yellow Press out of nothing. It was as if, in a spirit of contrariness, he had been moved by the pious utterance of one, Sir William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia in 1671 : "Thank God we have neither free school nor printing-press, and I hope we may not have for a hundred years to come." Though Sir William's successors saw to it that for nearly a hundred years that turbulence was under restraint, in another hundred years the free school and the printing-press, together, achieved more than the utmost that the Governor feared. In 1719 John Campbell boasted that the foreign news in the *Boston News-Letter* was only five months behind Great Britain. To-day the tables have been turned. It is America that has set the pace. The Harmsworths did no more than quicken the blood of the slow-pulsed Englishmen with a halfpenny patent medicine already exploited in the States, and found suitable for British consumption.

Great Britain was ready for the change. An extraordinary revolution was at work in the English people which appeared in a dramatic outburst of feeling at the time of the Boer War. Indeed, not only England, but all those countries of the world which had both come under the modern industrial

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system and were reaping the firstfruits of education, entered at that time upon a new and critical transition period. In a later chapter I shall discuss at greater length the effect of the new democratic spirit upon the Press, and the reciprocal effects of the Press upon the people. For the moment I merely observe that if the Press were to continue to have vitality it was bound to experience revolutionary changes at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries—changes which, in fact, have not yet been completed in Great Britain or in America. Its first appearance in England took the apparently trivial, but really ominous, form of such popular publications as *Tit Bits*, *Answers*, and *Pearson's Weekly* and illustrated comic papers of a more degraded character. The arrival of the *Daily Mail* was a more striking event. But the change which it initiated, which in the course of fifteen years it was destined to bring into almost all daily journalism in London, was inevitable in one form or another. If there is any doubt about that, it is only necessary to consider the parallel case of book-publishing, where no master-hand like that of Harmsworth has yet made its appearance. English publishers as a class are slow and dull-witted. There are, of course, exceptions, but for the most part they represent a weak compromise between the practical man of business and the unpractical man of letters, comprising the defects of both without the genius

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of either. Nevertheless, being business men according to their lights, they could not fail to respond in some measure to the prevalent laws of supply and demand. They could not fail to observe that the old system of accepting books exclusively in accordance with the literary taste of their accomplished "readers" no longer afforded the highest returns. That system served well enough when the public was limited, well-to-do, leisured, and fairly educated; the taste of a conventional publisher's reader corresponded to the taste of the conventional upper and middle-class public. But when to the thousands of old-fashioned readers were added the new millions who had been taught to read, and the intellectual emancipation of women added a yet vaster multitude of female and more leisured literates, it was obvious that a less exacting standard of thought and style, and a more exacting dose of sensation and sentimentalism, must be taken into account in the publisher's repertoire. The change did, indeed, very speedily make itself felt, and in the last fifteen or twenty years most manifestly. Dozens of new publishing houses sprang into existence to supply this new demand. The price of individual copies of books fell, as was only natural when so enormous a public was being fed. The inferior books came to outnumber the good in precisely the same proportion as it was a crude public that was being satisfied rather than an intelligent and intel-

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lectually scrupulous public. The publisher then encountered the difficulty that confronts the seller of patent medicines : he no longer caters for a single book-reading public ; for each book that he issues he has to win his way to that particular class, hidden amongst the mass of readers, which wants that particular book. Thus it is that he naturally elects for the most considerable and easily-found public, which requires the popular novel, the popular *chronique scandaleuse*, and the popular volume of notorious theology. And, as he goes on catering for these classes, he actually creates a taste for the spurious literature which, no doubt much against the grain, he continues to disseminate. There is, however, this important point which must be noticed. Inasmuch as there is still a considerable public which requires good literature, it is still profitable as well as creditable to every publisher to issue good books by authors sufficiently distinguished, or otherwise sufficiently fortunate, to make the publication of their books a known event for those interested in good literature. In other words, it is still profitable—as well as creditable—to a publisher to issue a certain number of good books. The fact is forced upon his attention that the public is various.

But the newspaper which modelled itself upon the American Yellow Press, depending as it must do upon vast circulations, made little attempt to consider the small minorities. On the one hand

it was designed to appeal to the million ; on the other hand it was founded and set upon a *frankly commercial basis*. By this, I do not mean that the pre-existent papers were not run upon sound commercial lines. On the contrary, most of the great penny papers of the later Victorian era enjoyed extraordinary prosperity. Their prosperity gave them freedom. The journalists who wrote for them remained constant to political principles and were able to speak from their convictions ; the critic was free ; the advertiser had no terrors. But the new Press was quite candidly a commercial concern from beginning to end ; only the market was to be considered. A paper was to be manufactured, advertised and circulated precisely as if it were a box of biscuits or a patent foot-warmer. It was to be prepared exclusively for the market ; it was not to be offered in a "take-it-or-leave-it" spirit, but it was to be modified, turned about, if necessary revolutionized, in just such a manner as would best adjust it to the popular appetite.

At first it made its bid for circulation, and circulation alone, for that was the indispensable basis of profit from advertisements. It set itself to ignore the small, well-educated public, and to appeal to hundreds of thousands of overworked clerks and working men, and to the majority of the rich whose intellectual requirements are no higher. It abolished the long and carefully elaborated leading article. It found no room for full reports of

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speeches, being content to quote short and sensational passages. It did not present complete and carefully guarded statements of correspondents who might aim rather at exactness than excitement. It no longer published reviews of books, but gave "gutting" notices of a few works which were supposed to have popular "news" value. Anything which would readily catch the attention of tired minds, anything which might afford a momentary sensation, a tickling of the jaded palate, anything arresting, any false alarm, or scandal, or morbid suggestion, or interesting freakishness—all such things were to have their place. This was to be a sort of "Barnum-and-Bailey show." The public was to be distracted from the horror of thinking, to be given respite from ennui. It was supposed that while it wants to know something about what is going on in the world, it requires no more than the ghost of an impression of truth, or, at the most, that somebody should relieve it of the trouble of sucking the juice out of the facts. Well, the half-penny Press could suck the juice out of facts and serve up the daily dish. It could compel attention for a moment, it could terrify and soothe, it could send its readers through the whole gamut of emotions and leave them unexhausted.

This was the first stage of the popular Press. We shall see later why it could not be the last, and also why it is that it has entered upon another critical phase, which, though for the moment it

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seems to threaten its very existence, can only result in another profound revolution in journalism. In order to arrive at the inner meaning of these dangers we must first attempt to make clear to ourselves what the Press essentially is, what function it fills in the State, what requirement, if any, it satisfies that can or cannot be satisfied by some other agency. Without attempting anything so ambitious as a history of the Press, I shall have to take certain historical facts into consideration before I can satisfactorily cope with its condition to-day.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE INFORMATION MARKET.

ON public platforms men use large phrases about the “power” and “influence” of the Press, but in private life they are more often engaged in jeering at its shortcomings. To be a writer of any kind is for a man to make of himself a butt at which the world is invited to tilt ; and the individual writings which are poured upon society through books, magazines, and newspapers seldom merit a better fate than they receive. From the sublimity of the compliment which a Lord Rosebery or a Mr. Bonar Law pays to an assemblage of dining Press-men, we turn to the ridiculous as we watch the individual journalist slaving at his routine tasks, pattering out his accustomed sentences, turning over pages of “flimsy,” or urging on his reporters to hackneyed ingenuities. Now and again we are reminded that a Disraeli or a John Morley were once active journalists, or that ex-President Roosevelt to-day is a regular writer for the Press. Occasionally there is published a book which is called a “contribution to literature,” or a single newspaper article which deflects the course of world-politics.

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But such splendid manifestations of power do not represent the famous "influence of the Press" any more than a meteor represents the familiar appearance of the sky. If the Press is powerful it is as an aggregate, as a multitude of writings, each of small importance when taken by itself. It is in its vast bulk, its incessant repetitions, its routine utterance of truth and falsehood, its ubiquity, its permeation of the whole fabric of modern life, that the Press, however blatant, rather conceals than reveals its insidious power of suggestion. This confused welter of reports, of opinions and conclusions, of exhortation and derision, of communication and invitation, has become the chief means through which the modern world expresses itself, through which it is articulate.

If the service rendered by the Press could be measured at all, it would be measured by the extent to which it enables the world to share knowledge and ideas—by the extent to which it is *communicative*. If its reports are not credited, it stands convicted of failing to communicate the truth. If its reports are believed, the actions which follow from its true or false information afford the measure of its success. Most people get such knowledge as they have of public life from the papers or magazines. For the majority of men this is a very partial and one-sided knowledge. It is not necessarily the fault of the Press or any part of it that the average man's stock of informa-

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tion is so imperfect. One man will get more from the same printed matter than another. One man receives suggestion through ideas, another does not. The Press as a popular force is not a self-dependent entity ; it is relative to the people who read it ; its effect is the effect which it has upon men. The ideas which are widely communicated are only those ideas which men and women are capable of receiving, and the prosperous journal is the journal which has rightly gauged its public. Thus the Press is in one aspect made by Press-men, and in another aspect it is made by the public which reads it. Its action is reciprocal. It communicates, but it communicates only what people are willing to receive. So far as it is expressive, it is expressive of the reader no less than the writer. It provides the business man with the latest facts about the money market ; and he puts sufficient confidence in certain kinds of reports to act upon them without hesitation. If we notice that all the women in England are wearing their hats or their skirts in the same way in a given season, that is not because they have all been to Paquin's, or because their dress-makers have been there ; but because they all study the fashion journals which tell them what they want to know. The dress fashions of the world are the fashions to which women are willing to submit ; it is the Press which takes the largest share in making fashions known—which brings the women of England, France and America to-

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gether so that they all dress alike and have as nearly as possible the same thoughts about dress. This fashion-aspiration becomes articulate through the Press ; the whole world of women responds to a universal feminine desire which has been focussed and again disseminated through the communicative power of printed words or pictures. The Press of to-day is the most important means of inter-communication, and its success is proportionate to its capacity for making society *articulate*.

We shall have to inquire, then, in what way and to what extent it fulfils this function of making a nation articulate ; how far it is an effective instrument for disseminating among men and women the truths which they want to learn or which they can be persuaded to learn ; whether it is a machine well adapted for expressing and reflecting the normal needs of normal men and women, and also their exceptional but perhaps equally urgent needs. In what way, in fact, does it contribute to an ideal of complete national self-consciousness, or by what sort of inner corruption does it make for self-deception ?

It would not be easy to conceive how modern society could be kept together without print. It is evident that if printing were abolished for a year, there would be very little chance for a big modern nation to keep itself going except through an autocrat or through an oligarchy of men in close touch with one another. Far larger resources would be

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required to keep an organization together if there were no cheap means of distributing ideas ; those who were already rich and powerful would alone be capable of organizing, and therefore also of suppressing, public opinion. The highly complicated modern State retains its organic unity through a highly developed mechanism. This mechanism keeps all the parts in touch with one another, enables men to speak to one another indirectly, and puts the common stock of information about the State at the disposal of most of the citizens. To get a clear idea of the part which the Press has played in linking up society, and in enabling men to act together, we must understand how nations managed to be nations at all in the days when there were no printed papers and no easily circulated books. We shall see that in a large country the lack of such a mechanism threw the power into the hands of a few ; just as in modern times the possession of a means of distributing information is tending also to distribute power.

It was the late Professor Seeley who established the distinction between what he called the "organic" State and the "inorganic" State. I shall try to make it clear that the organic State, in the sense in which he used the term, is the State which is in process of becoming *articulate* ; that it is an organism which grows in proportion as it develops self-expression and intercommunication ; which provides itself with a means of exchanging ideas. In

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every organic State, said Seeley, the government in the last resort depends upon a "government-making power"; and that government-making power rests ultimately with the citizens of a country, who, however slow to action, or dulled by habitude, or submissive to oppression, are nevertheless the only source of authority. In the organic State the power which the ruler exercises is drawn from elements within the State; to maintain it he must either satisfy his subjects, or hoodwink them, or divide them; but in any case it is from his subjects that he derives it. The inorganic State, in which the authority of the ruler has no sanction among his subjects, is strictly speaking not a State at all. It is generally a country, like India or Tripoli, held by right of conquest; that is to say, by a force not derived from the citizens, but from without.

Professor Seeley generalized brilliantly about the source and sanction of government, and he went on to analyse with his incisive logic the stock ideas about constitutions, representation, responsibility and freedom. But he did not address himself to the question to which all other questions of constitutional government should be subsidiary—that of national self-consciousness, of power dependent upon knowledge. He is not alone among historians in ignoring the problem which every practical ruler in the world has known to be the most important problem of government—that of being well informed. Just as every military man knows

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that an army lives not merely "upon its stomach," but in an even more important sense upon its Intelligence Department, so every ruler in an unconstitutional State maintains his rule by a monopoly of political knowledge. Richelieu effected his great *coup d'état* against Marie de Medici because he was well informed. Charles I lost his throne because the Parliament in 1641 was better informed about the state of the country than he was. If the Government of Lord North had known the condition of the American colonies, it would never have perpetrated the Stamp Act. Many of the disasters which happened to Napoleon in 1813 and 1814 were due to the fact that his generals were afraid to tell him how their men were reduced and their supplies exhausted. Napoleon was misinformed by his generals not less than he himself misinformed his countrymen. In more modern times the Sultan Abdul Hamid so thoroughly realized that despotic power depends upon a monopoly of knowledge that he became infatuated with the idea ; the post and the telegraph were secret engines of his Government ; his spies were in every city ; he trusted no one with his State secrets. To this day the Indian Government rigorously enforces its Press Law, because it knows that to distribute knowledge about politics is to distribute political influence. Every Government is aware that information is power. Russian policy in Persia is more effective than British policy, because, of the two Foreign

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Offices, the Russian is the better informed about the condition of the country. The United States were in a position to establish the Monroe Doctrine, and to make it real, because Americans are interested in all the countries of America, and are making it their business to know what is happening there. Europeans, in spite of a well-organized news service, only read the news when they happen to be financially interested.

I would suggest that a great work remains to be written by an historian of the future—a history of news—that is to say, a history of the means by which Governments and other powers within a State acquired the information, the knowledge of facts and events, upon which they acted. When once that history has been written, or when once its method has been applied to the history of a single nation, historians can never again be content merely to record the achievements of great men and to trace the organic growth of institutions. Macaulay, who had an early Victorian belief in democracy, did appreciate the importance of the Press. But, as a rule, though attention has been paid to isolated events in the history of information, such events have generally been treated as if they were really isolated rather than as significant links in the continuous history of government. Domesday Book has been examined through every instrument of scientific research, but it has scarcely been used as an example to show that the Normans mas-

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tered England because they knew that superiority of power goes with superiority of information. Much has been written about the dropping of the Press Act in England in 1695, but the English Revolution has scarcely been judged, as it might have been, by the extent to which it freed the Press. The sensational trial of Wilkes, like all sensational matters, has been treated at length ; but I do not think it has been made clear that the gradual enlightenment of the eighteenth century was providing the condition for such an outburst at almost any moment in the latter half of the century. Historians of the Victorian age do not fail to comment on the arrival of the telegraph and the penny post, and the abolition in England of the paper duty and the tax on newspapers. But examining the histories of Sir Spencer Walpole and Mr. Justin McCarthy I find no serious discussion of the newspaper Press, from which both of them have drawn a great part of their facts. Historians have seldom explained, what the politician always knows, that there can be no democracy without publicity, that the dissemination of knowledge is the first condition for the dissemination of power.

Returning, then, to the "organic" State of Professor Seeley, I have suggested that this will prove to be the State which is in process of becoming articulate and self-conscious. The primitive tribe, with its patriarchal organization, or the early village community with its headman and its elders, was origin-

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ally a small social unit ; members of the society could know all about the other members of the society ; so long as it was not dominated by a larger unity, authority could only be exercised with the knowledge of all, and, to a corresponding extent, with the consent of all. But the larger the society, the less easy is it for members to know about one another ; the ruler has more power, because his subjects cannot easily act together. He has the knowledge and the organization. They are units undirected to a common end. The former can always control the situation by his superior knowledge or machinery of information. The religious sanction of government, seldom lacking in tribal organizations, was welcome to the patriarch because the "mysteries" of religion helped him to conceal the secrets of government.

It is more instructive to examine developed States as they existed side by side at the beginning of the fifth century B.C.—on the one hand the vast, unwieldy Empire of Darius, which stretched across Western Asia like the very similar Turkish Empire of to-day, and, on the other hand, the small, compact city-States of Greece—Sparta, Corinth, Athens, Thebes, etc.—with their various "aristocratic," "oligarchic," and "democratic" institutions. Advanced civilization had existed in Asia many centuries before Greece emerged from barbarism. But, *pace* Herodotus, the inhabitants of Western Asia could never have had even a conception of a

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democracy till the Greeks gave it them. The reason is obvious. Asiatic geography was prior to Asiatic docility and fatalism ; the great rivers, the broad plains, the lack of numerous natural boundaries, gave scope for the accumulation of vast territories under a single despot. There were few means of intercommunication in such an Empire except in so far as it was organized for purposes of government. The masses of the people knew nothing about the Empire as a whole or the power that controlled them, except that taxes were wrung from them, recruits levied among them, or troops quartered upon them. Such knowledge of government as they possessed was the knowledge that it was irresistible and incalculable. Just as the army with which Xerxes invaded Greece was evidently a mob of unconnected military units, so the peoples over whom he despotically ruled consisted of many alien races, peoples who were ignorant of one another, who had no common knowledge, no common interests, and lacked the identity either of a common religion or a common nationality.

Democracy could never have arisen even from the ruins of Asiatic despotism. There was no one to represent the common feeling, for there was no community. Even if popular feeling could have existed there would have been no way of expressing it. When Assyrian, or Lydian, or Persian monarchs fell, they fell before the superior force of despots like themselves.

Very different were the conditions in Greece. The small city-State, compact within its natural boundaries of sea, river and mountains, was a community the affairs of which could be mastered on the spot by every active and intelligent man. Men met and talked together in the market-place or in the neighbourhood of the temples ; above all they met in Athens at the great Dionysiac Festivals, which were probably a greater contributory force to democracy than all the deliberate reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes. It is true centuries of civic life preceded the popular constitutions, but the conditions of democracy were present as soon as a collection of tribes became stereotyped into a city-State. We may be sure that the early Kings, governing so small a community, would only be endured while aggression was feared from a foreign enemy, or while their rule was on the whole tolerable. They emerge into the light of history only when their rule has become oppressive ; therefore they disappear, and are succeeded, not by other Kings, but by aristocracies. And when the aristocracies had become oppressive, and were denounced as oligarchies, they were succeeded, not by other members of the ruling class, but by leaders of the people, demagogues who set up "tyrannies" of their own. And when the tyrants in their turn abused their power, another revolution brings us to the direct rule of the free-men of the city, and in half of the cities of

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Greece democracy was established in fact and in principle.

Democracy was possible in such a city as Athens because every man of moderate leisure could keep himself informed of the affairs of the small community to which he belonged. There was no penny post, no telegraph, no newspapers, no printed book ; but a man had only to walk through the city to learn all that he would learn about public affairs. The games, the religious festivals, the theatre, the law-courts, the assembly, and the schools, where sophists lectured, brought men together ; everything was discussed ; everything could be known—Athens was a great emporium of information, and the private citizen (*ἰδιώτης*), the man who took no interest in public affairs, was stigmatized as a fool. The State became self-conscious and articulate through the spoken word. Poetry was recited rather than read. Plays were to be *seen* and *heard* in the theatre. Philosophy was *talked* rather than derived from books. Every free citizen, though he saw no written reports of public debates, knew all about them because he had *heard* them. The State was small enough to be well informed about itself without any more elaborate machinery than that which brought its citizens into public places. Being well informed, the citizen could influence public affairs in proportion to the strength of his personality.

Surely those historians who lament that the

Greek cities were never able to confederate and form a nation-State express a vain regret. If such a nation had been formed on the basis of common customs, common language and religion, it must have been at the expense of their characteristic qualities. A Greek city, in spite of its faction, was a natural political unity. But there could have been no union between the various cities without sacrificing the political type. The various States which joined the Delian confederacy found to their cost that they had become subjects of Athens instead of her allies. Nor could a union have been effected under the amphictyony of Delphi without giving supremacy to a religious caste. Even the small area of Greece was too large to contain a united nation without despotism or oligarchy.

It was for the same reason that Rome grew out of her Republicanism. At the very time when she was developing a strong democratic sentiment, she outgrew—territorially—the possibilities of an ancient democracy. If Rome had remained a city unhampered by an Empire, she would have been a democracy long before the revolutionary period of the Gracchi. But the city of Rome became lost in the vastness of the Roman Empire, and it was inevitable that so extensive an area should be controlled by a central authority which could be the focus of news, which could accumulate information from every province, which could be the brain and directing point of a thousand activities. The

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Roman Empire had no common existence save in the person of the Emperor, and in that Roman law of which he was the personal custodian and representative.

But the Greek example of democracy had been held up before the Romans, and they could never wholly forget the popular aspirations and the strife of parties which added to the turbulence of the last century of the Republic. The extension of literary culture created a class which clamoured for information, which no Emperor could afford to despise, and naturally was most in evidence in the neighbourhood of the Metropolis. The Senate, which in the best days of the Republic had been the bitterest enemy of the populace, was afterwards extolled by sentimental antiquarians as the symbol of ancient liberty. As early as 59 B.C. the *Acta Senatus* were first published, and these reports, though suppressed by Augustus, were revived by his successors, who loaded that servile body with the appearance without the reality of power. It became the vehicle not only for registering the decrees of the Emperor, but of making known to the cultured public those facts which it was desirable they should know. The *Acta Diurna* of the Senate held just such a place in Imperial Rome as the *London Gazette* held in the reign of Charles II, or the *Gazette de France* under the patronage of Richelieu. Probably, indeed, they were fuller and more scientific. They gave

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extracts from the *Acta Senatus* or what we should call Parliamentary reports. They published such facts about the Court and the Imperial Family as the Emperor wished to make known. They gave also law reports in the form of extracts from the *Acta Forensia* and magisterial edicts. And what was of far greater importance, they issued statements about revenue from the provinces and the supply of corn for the Roman proletariat, and statistics of births and deaths in the city. Nor did they omit those popular features which held so large a place in the journalism of the seventeenth century in England, as in the journalism of America to-day—accounts of prodigies, fires, sports (*ludi*) and sensational occurrences in general. The *actuarii* who copied out these journals were much in request; they were hired to read them at dinner parties, and were well paid for their services.

The Roman Empire gave law and order to the world, but it trampled upon personal initiative. There was no natural community of feeling between the countries which were swept into its net—between Syria and Spain, between Greece and Gaul or Britain. It carried the *pax Romana* into barbarian lands, and conferred its citizenship as a privilege. It was followed by roads, and viaducts, circuses and villas. The towns became Roman towns, and the laws were Roman laws. In giving uniformity to the world it destroyed what was national, local and unique. If Italy had been bold

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enough to rise in protest, she would have been crushed by Gaul and Thrace. If Gaul had risen, she would have been crushed by the legions of other provinces. For there was no popular sympathy between one part of this vast empire and another; there was no organized communication except that which centred in the Imperial government. The officials of the army and the civil services were the eyes and brains of this prodigious organism, and no Roman Emperor feared any rivals except those who controlled his tax-collectors and his legions. Under such a system ideas could never be put to a practical test, so that ideas themselves lost their living interest, and became more and more abstract, speculative and barren. Literature languished in academies, and men of culture, denied the opportunity of altering life by the force of ideas, had no intellectual scope except in pedantic or frivolous studies. There was no such thing as a nation under the rule of the Cæsars; there was no racial impulse seeking to make itself articulate, no corporate action resulting from the communication of vital ideas from one part of the community to another. The atmosphere of Rome was hostile to energetic literature, and tended to stifle that eager spirit of propagandism and curiosity which gave birth, centuries later, to the printing-press and journalism. And when the Empire broke up, it left behind it another and not less powerful enemy to free thought and enlighten-

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ment—the Holy Roman Church and Scholasticism. Though the spiritual despotism of the Church helped to steady Europe in the period of violent transition, it was destined to retard freedom of thought for a thousand years.

## CHAPTER III.

### A MEDIAEVAL “TRUST.”

THERE are two functions of journalism which are generally regarded as distinct—to supply news, and comment upon the news. It is often urged as an objection against certain journals that they allow comment to usurp the place of news, and that the news is coloured by opinion. Though the distinction is perfectly just, it is none the less true that news, or information, is the only basis upon which opinion can be formed ; and conversely, where there is no opinion, there is no demand for information. The two go together. An informed person is almost always a person with opinions, and an informed community is the only community in which there is a “public opinion.”

Knowledge and opinion are formidable because they influence action. It is only when men have the same interests and are informed about the same things, that they can be brought to the same opinion ; and it is only when this real community exists between them that they can be brought to concerted action. In the large modern State the Press is the chief means of bringing men together ; in ancient Athens, as we have seen, it was sufficient

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that men should go and hear speeches in the Assembly, or talk together in the market-place. But in mediaeval England, when there were no Press and no market-place in which all Englishmen could meet, there was no easy means of informing men about things in which they were collectively interested, of giving them food for opinion, of bringing them together. There were only two organizations which could come into direct contact with all Englishmen, which could express their wishes or intentions in every part of the country. One was the organized power of the Crown ; the other was that of the Catholic Church. In the Middle Ages the Church exercised much of the influence which to-day is exercised by the Press. But it had a monopoly ; it was a gigantic corporation. We speak of modern newspapers as being “inspired.” The Church in its hey-day had the advantage of being divinely inspired, infallible.

There were, indeed, communities within the State ; associations of citizens who had the same interests, who happened to be in touch with one another, who had the same sources of information, and became powerful through alliance. Now and again the peasants could be organized as in the rebellion of Wat the Tyler ; but amongst them there was no effective means of creating corporate feeling, or producing concerted action ; so that discontents could be localized, and rebellions suppressed. But the burgesses in the towns, the merchants belonging

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to the great trade gilds, did form powerful communities within the State. The members of a gild had the common interest of their trade. Their agents moved hither and thither about the country, and were often in touch with foreign markets. The gilds were the great repositories of information about everything connected with their trade. They had their own mysteries ; their members were united ; they became powerful as unions of vested interests, enjoying their special privileges and charters, and often able to make their voice heard at Court.

More powerful, if less united, were the barons of England. They, too, represented vested interests, which were often opposed to those of the King. They moved to and fro between their feudal homes and the capital. They often followed the Court abroad, and knew all its gossip. Their feudal duties gave them experience in administration and constant intercourse with the central executive. They had their own servants and emissaries ; they met one another, and had knowledge of the world ; and in the reigns of John and Henry III they showed that upon provocation they could act together. Magna Charta and the Parliament of Simon de Montfort were the work not of an articulate nation demanding liberty, but of an articulate nobility, which, in asserting its own rights, had the good sense, or the good fortune, to enlist against the excessive power of the Crown interests wider than its own.

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It should be observed that any person or association of persons possessed of what we may call a "vested interest," has always an advantage in getting information and in using it. The gilds-merchant and the barons had vested interests. The King and the Church divided between them the greatest vested interests in the country. The more power became centralized in the hands of the King, and the more he became really the supreme administrator of the country—as Edward I was—the more it became essential to him to know exactly what was happening. He must send his judges on circuit; he must have his sheriff in every county; he must have his emissaries at foreign Courts; his officials must make reports to him upon every subject and from every quarter. Domesday Book is sufficient to prove that William the Conqueror realized that government depends upon information.

I have said that there was only one single vested interest in England which could compare with that of the Plantagenet Kings; it was the vested interest of the Church. It was not only that it owned great monastic buildings and vast estates, which increased so alarmingly that the Statute of Mortmain was passed to check the saving of souls at the expense of estates; but it had also a monopoly of learning, and controlled the professions and the civil service. It was not easy to get a good education excepting by way of the Church; there were few employments for men of learning unless they

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were also in Holy Orders. To be an educated man, or to take up any calling which required brains, involved in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries the subjection of the mind to a hard-and-fast intellectual discipline which rejected intellectual initiative, which discouraged and indeed punished intellectual originality, and, for a philosophy, bade men be content with the barren ingenuities of Scholastic theology.

But the Church was not, as most critics choose to regard it, a mere machine for sterilizing the intellect. It had no temporal power excepting such as the temporal State chose to give it, and it could not have retained its hold over Christendom unless it had made a profoundly human and spiritual appeal to the minds or the emotions of men. The only obvious weapons of offence possessed by the Papacy were those of Excommunication and Interdict ; those weapons proved effective only in so far as Rome could command the spiritual allegiance of society. The excommunication of the Emperor Henry IV nearly proved fatal to that monarch ; but to be excommunicated mattered little to Henry VIII of England, because the Church had suffered in the estimation of Englishmen. It had lost its supreme power in making opinion. England was successfully laid under an Interdict in the reign of John because the Church still governed its own members, and prevailed absolutely over the minds of the people ; but no

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Pope could have attempted to put Tudor England under an Interdict without publishing his own weakness. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Catholic Church was the most powerful influence in England, because it monopolized knowledge, because it was strongly organized, because it was at all times and at all places in touch with the people, teaching all of them the same things, informing them, exhorting them, commanding them. On the one hand the Church attended to the sick, dispensed charities to the poor ; on the other hand it had the sole power of absolving them from their sins and smoothing their way through Purgatory. It educated such of the young as it thought fit for education, and told all men what they were to believe about this world and the next. Drawing to itself all the intellectual talent of the country, there was no one to dispute the facts it announced, the ideas it propagated, the morals it inculcated. To differ from the Church was to be a schismatic and a heretic, and to be a heretic was not only to be damned, but to be a social pariah—which was worse. The Church was supreme in the Middle Ages not only by the strong organization which tided over dangerous crises, nor by the vested interests which it could rally to its support, but because it could arouse and minister to popular emotion, and was the maker and controller of opinion. The Church in the Middle Ages had not only the power of the pulpit, it had also the power

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which now belongs to the Press, the schools, the universities, and other centres of culture. It was the most powerful Trust that ever existed. It was a Trust which monopolized all traffic in ideas ; which standardized thought and diluted it in the interests of orthodoxy and sometimes mere expediency ; which could exclude all rivals because it had sole power to excommunicate in this world and send to Hell in the next. As long as it retained the respect and veneration of the people it was strong enough to crush the publicity of new ideas.

If the Middle Ages deserve to be called the Dark Ages that is not so much because dynastic interests plunged Europe into wars, as because new ideas which might have vivified life were stifled by the Church. I do not mean that it was a barbarous age which gave no encouragement to intellectual pursuits. On the contrary, a larger proportion of the population throughout Christendom had complete leisure to pursue pure thought than existed at any other time in European history. But until the time when the feudal system was breaking up and the Catholic Church was losing its influence, nearly all the great social and political movements resulted from the accidental pressure of facts rather than from the ferment of ideas. After the Renaissance there was a new impulse in the world. The Puritan Revolution was to a large extent a revolution of principles. The Revolution of 1689 had its definite philosophical basis, the two

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sides of which are represented in the writings of Hobbes and Locke. The American War of Independence was preceded by a definite formulation of the rights of the Colonists. And the French Revolution owes its essential character to the writings of Rousseau. But in the Church-ridden ages, we see that even Magna Charta was little more than the registering of customary rights which had been outraged, and the Parliament of Simon de Montfort was no more than a lucky expedient. St. Francis bound himself to a certain order and discipline of life, but he asserted no ideas which were not already endorsed by the Church. Anselm used the methods of pure reason to prove the existence of God, but his reason supported orthodoxy at every point. Roger Bacon stands out alone in those centuries as the man who experimented in science and sought freedom in philosophy ; and he was thrown into prison for magical practices. So simple a mechanical expedient as that of printing, known to the Romans and neglected by them only because slave labour was cheap, was not re-invented till the end of the Middle Ages, because there was nothing to encourage its use.

The Renaissance of Learning is generally attributed to the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the arrival in Italy of the dispossessed scholars of the Greek Empire. But the culture of the Eastern Empire would have made its way earlier to the West if the West had been prepared to receive it.

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Had scholars arrived in the days when the Roman Church was predominant they would have received the same treatment as Roger Bacon received. The revival of interest in Greek literature began indeed before the fall of Constantinople. It was not only that an occasional student such as Petrarch or Boccaccio had some acquaintance with the Greek tongue ; but in the early fifteenth century Emanuel Chrysoloras was teaching Greek in Pavia, Venice and Rome, and in 1423 one of his disciples, Aurispa, who had travelled to Constantinople for the special purpose of research, is said to have brought home with him to Venice 238 volumes in the Greek language. But at that time the Church was losing ground all over Christendom. Wycliffe in England and Hus in Bohemia had made their historic attacks upon its abuses, and in Italy Catholic Scholasticism no longer commanded the respect of intellectuals. With or without the seizure of the Eastern Empire by the Turks, the Revival of Learning in the fifteenth century was inevitable. And the reason why it was inevitable was because the Roman Church was losing its spiritual and intellectual monopoly.

It was by reason of its inner decay and venality that it ceased to command the entire spiritual allegiance of the masses, and lost also its monopoly of ideas. The learning, which it had discouraged, revived. Italian lecturers began the teaching of Greek at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

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Gutenberg began his experiments in printing in the forties. In association with Fust, the goldsmith, and Schoeffer, the engraver, he printed a Latin Bible in 1458 and a Latin Dictionary in 1460. Events such as these, constituting starting-points of the Press, cannot be separated from the history of the decay of the Church, and the Revival of Learning. The Reformation was a part of the Renaissance, and the invention of printing was necessary to both. There was little social or political advance in the Middle Ages until the intellectual ascendancy of the Church was questioned, and its monopoly of communicating and restricting ideas was broken down. It was in those countries in which the Reformation and the Renaissance went hand-in-hand that philosophy and science were freed, and a new vehicle was discovered for communicating information and ideas. The pulpit still remained as a means of publicity and persuasion. The lecture-hall remains to this day in the universities to waste the time of undergraduates and provide an audience for dons. But one of the greatest of the functions which the mediaeval Church abused was taken over for ever by the printing-press. When Caxton started printing at Westminster in 1476 (?), he was engaged in the same inevitable movement which enabled Henry VIII to declare himself sole head on earth of the English Church. When Scholasticism abdicated, the printed book became a necessity.

## CHAPTER IV.

### RESTRAINT AND REBELLION.

“NOTHING is more apt to surprise a foreigner,” wrote David Hume less than ninety years after Roger L’Estrange was appointed Surveyor of the Press, “than the extreme liberty which we enjoy in this country, of communicating whatever we please to the public, and of openly censuring every measure entered into by the King or his ministers.” The liberty which Hume extolled would scarcely satisfy the modern editor. The middle-eighteenth century tolerated personal abuse and scurrilousness which to-day would expose the writer to the penalties of libel; but what to-day we should regard as “fair comment” might then at any moment be construed into sedition. The Wilkes episode was still to come. An editor of *The Times* was to go to prison. The Press had not yet become the Fourth Estate.

But in principle the great battle had already been fought. It was fought side by side with the other great battles which produced the first phase in the movement still far from complete—the movement towards the ideal of a self-governing, self-expressive,

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articulate nation. It cannot be separated from the struggles for religious freedom and constitutional government. It was one of the conditions without which these struggles could never have come to a head. The Press was a weapon as important as the sword. And from a very early date men saw its vast potentialities.

Even in the fifteenth century the "new invention" of printing was regarded as a royal monopoly. In Henry VIII's reign the control of the Press was more significant than was at first apparent to the royal patron of religion and learning. Henry VIII has been called the most despotic monarch that ever sat upon the English throne, and his absolutism is attributed to the fact that the power of the nobles had been broken, and that the commercial middle classes had not yet realized their strength. But there was another cause which contributed to the strength of the Tudors. Rome was discredited. The clergy were no longer either united or venerated. Their immense power of controlling opinion had been undermined, and Henry VIII was able to usurp the supremacy over a Church whose authority had formerly rivalled or even surpassed that of the Crown. The Church, or rather the clergy and religious controversialists who took the place of the now dismembered Church, did not retreat without a struggle. They disputed every inch of the ground for another two centuries, even when one adversary had been replaced by another. In the

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long run it was destined to bequeath its opinion-making functions to a more agile, versatile and independent agency—to all that we now designate as “The Press.”

But we must observe that in its simplest aspect “The Press” is not a single, composite organization like that of the Civil Government or the Church. There is no special set of interests which by its nature it defends ; no special set of doctrines which it exists to propagate. It is only an instrument for publishing news or ideas. Those ideas may be of one complexion, or of another. News may be selected or doctored to suit the interests of one party or another. The Press is not a separate power of a special kind within the State directed to special ends. It is only an agent which may be used for *any* end, and to support or oppose *any* existing power. In the Middle Ages the Church controlled most of those agencies by which men’s minds are influenced ; that is to say, it had a monopoly in that kind of distribution which was afterwards taken over by the Press. The Press was brought into existence in the fifteenth century, not because a single new power had arisen—the Press itself—but because the Church was losing its authority ; new ideas were gaining ground, ideas which sought for expression and publication, and found in printed books and pamphlets an opportunity which was denied them in the university, the school, the pulpit and the confessional. Printing provided the

exponents of the new thought with a means of disseminating their ideas ; and orthodox Catholics resorted to it in self-defence. Henry VIII himself, half-emancipated by Renaissance learning and as yet unmoved by the Reformation, won by a book the title of Defender of the Faith.

The Church was not slow to realize that its monopoly in ideas was dangerously threatened. For at least a century and a half the most serious restraints upon the Press were imposed in the interests of the State religion. When Henry VIII became head of the English Church the interests of the State religion and of the Crown became identical. Attacks upon the one were attacks upon the other. So completely had the Catholic Church dominated the culture of Europe for half a millennium that for a century or two after the Renaissance and the Reformation the main differences of thought were to be still expressed in terms of religious difference, and politics assumed a sectarian shape. When the English Crown took over the control of the Church, and the interests of the national religion became identical with those of the supreme civil authority, the King expected to enjoy the prerogatives of both. There was nothing more perilous to a Crown which had adopted the hierarchy than the free expression of ideas ; for free ideas must turn against irresponsible authority, whether it be authority in matters of religion or authority in matters of civil government. Henry VIII scented an enemy

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in the Press. Had he not himself written a book, and did he not know as well as any man that it was a weapon which could be used on the side of authority or against it? He assumed an absolute control over the Press, partly by virtue of the prerogative by which all "new inventions" were royal monopolies, and more especially by virtue of the ecclesiastical supremacy.

It was because the Press from the first revealed itself as a means of spreading unauthorized ideas that it was from the first subject to restriction. The Crown controlled it by the grant of monopolies, by the *Imprimatur*, and by the General Warrant, which provided for the summary treatment of unauthorized literature. Monopolies were granted in the reign of Edward VI to ensure against violation of the Prayer Book, and the powers of the Stationers' Company received official recognition in the reign of Mary. Under Elizabeth there were systematic attempts to "gag the Press." A Royal Proclamation of 1559, a Star Chamber Ordinance of 1566, and yet another Ordinance of 1586 were directed against the rising spirit of religious controversy, and re-asserted the powers of the Crown to control publicists by means of the *Imprimatur*, and, through the Stationers, to penalize them by the right of search. Again and again it was a religious crisis which precipitated a re-statement of the principle of control. Now it was the Mar-Prelate controversy, in the reign of Elizabeth; now it

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was the outburst of Bastwicke or Prynne, calling forth the high-Anglican fanaticism of Laud and the rigours of the Star Chamber. In all those years of controversy and war in which the English Constitution was in the making, religion dominated politics and permeated the Press. The official religion sought to gag the unofficial religion in the same act by which the civil authority was gagging free speech. Free speech in those days generally implied religious speech, and to spread ideas was to assert the right of Englishmen to possess their own souls, and therefore also, as a natural corollary, to possess their own bodies. For to publish an unauthorized opinion had, as the authorities thought, a proper consequence in the cutting off of ears. That was the long-persisting, mediaeval and official attitude which over-rode the spirit of the Renaissance—the spirit which found its most powerful expression in Milton's *Areopagitica*.

It is significant that the first quarrels over the Press were about opinions. Elizabeth's Government suppressed *comment*, but it had not yet been confronted with the peril of published *news*. But though at the end of the sixteenth century there was no regular newspaper which informed men about the events of the day, the spirit of the Renaissance was leavening the country in other ways. The abolition of the monasteries was followed by the foundation of grammar schools. At the end of Elizabeth's reign there were more laymen in this

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country who could read than there had ever been before. There were restraints on the sale of pamphlets written by Presbyterian heretics, but it was easy enough to buy not only Greek and Roman and Italian classics, but translations such as those which provided Shakespeare with his plots. In the reign of James I there already existed a considerable public which had been nursed upon general literature ; it consisted of men who were able to form independent opinions about what was going on in the world ; and hence the inevitable demand for *information*. Give them information, and these men would constitute a new power in the State. They would become critics of Government and of Church. They were potential *opponents* of Government and Church. The existence of such men within the State involved a menace to aristocracy, the beginning of that shifting of power downwards from the creatures of the Crown to the increasing number of those who *know* and can apply their knowledge.

At all times statesmen necessarily have had their own agents and spies to supply them with information. The Tudor statesman had his own "intelligencer" who wrote him "letters of news" on the subjects in which he was interested. For instance, Sir Robert Sidney, brother of Sir Philip Sidney, residing officially at Flushing, late in Elizabeth's reign, paid Rowland White, the postmaster, to send him regular correspondence about the intrigues of the Court. But there was now a larger public

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which was demanding information. As early as 1594 the half-yearly volume of *Mercurius Gallo-belgicus* written by various authors in Latin, and published at Cologne, was eagerly bought by Englishmen who were interested in the German Wars. At the same time, or shortly after, "letters of news" were multiplied by scriveners. Composed partly in Amsterdam and partly in London, they were copied and dispatched to different parts of England, and the distribution of them was facilitated early in the seventeenth century by the institution of a regular postal service. But printing was still subject to the licenser. In the reign of James I many "Relations," as they were called, were surreptitiously printed and circulated in defiance of all authority. In 1622 the Government so far yielded as to sanction the publication of certain periodicals dealing with foreign news, and in that year a "coranto" (*courant*) began to appear every week publishing the news about the German Wars. In 1626 Thomas Auber had a regular title, or "catchword," writing under the name of "Mercurius Britannicus"; and it is worth noticing that five years later Richelieu had the foresight to patronize the *Gazette de France*, a journal suggested and planned by Théophraste Renaudot. In 1632 the corantos were suppressed when the Spanish ambassador complained of their vexatious tone, but they were resumed five years later, when a monopoly in foreign news was granted to Butter and Bourne.

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The year 1641 marks a revolution in the history of the Press. Though “seditious” literature emanating from the Puritan and Parliamentary side had poured forth without license and had run the gauntlet of Star Chamber agents, it had been impossible to print openly any periodical news excepting about foreign affairs. All the burning questions of the day which were soon to precipitate civil war were denied the free outlet of discussion; it was an act of war upon the State not only to express an independent opinion about government or religion, but to relate the crudest facts. But in 1641 Parliament arbitrarily assumed a Royal Prerogative by giving its own *Imprimatur* to what *The Times* (10 September, 1912) has called the “first English periodical of domestic news.” It was published by John Thomas of Smithfield, and afterwards by William Cooke, of Furnival’s Inn-gate; it was written by Samuel Pecke, who proved himself a versatile though far from erudite journalist; and in due course its title, or “catch-word,” the “Perfect Diurnall,” was transferred to the outside page. It was followed by a host of unauthorized rivals, which “mercury women,” shouting “books,” hawked about in the streets of London.

We must not suppose that the Parliament which authorized the *Perfect Diurnall* was inspired by a lofty conception of the virtue of free speech and the expression of public sentiment. It was inspired solely by the desire to propagate the Parliamentary

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or Puritan point of view represented by themselves, and hitherto suppressed. What their action did show was that they realized the power of opinion, and the power of information in organizing opinion. The Parliament was to prove itself as harsh in punishing offending journalists as ever the Star Chamber had been. Even Pecke himself was twice imprisoned for small errors, and there were few effective journalists of the time who escaped the penalties of the law. But the Parliament and the Commonwealth, having once allowed journalists to taste the sweets of freedom, could never wholly escape the consequences. The licensed journals were suppressed by Cromwell in 1649, the year of his bloody campaign in Ireland, and a Licensing Act was passed imposing the harshest penalties.

Cromwell has again and again been accused of being more severe to the Press than the Star Chamber, which preceded him, or even than the "bloodhound of the Press," Roger L'Estrange, who came after him. To urge this as a reproach against Cromwell is to reproach him for not being true to his own superb and despotic arrogance. Cromwell was as far from being a democrat as was Strafford, if democracy implies rule of the people by the people. He believed in himself and in no one else. His rule was the logical outcome of the Civil War ; an appeal to force means the dominance of force ; his was a military dictatorship. Cromwell knew that no dictatorship can exist in a commu-

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nity where free opinions can be freely circulated. Every leading article not inspired by the Government was, in the view of an unconstitutional ruler like Cromwell, a stab in the back of the Government, a thrust inspired in the spirit of anarchy against order. And it must be admitted that the Press which burst out in a short-lived orgy of freedom after Cromwell's death, was more violent, licentious, scurrilous and irresponsible than it has ever been before or since. If ever there was a Yellow Press in England in the vilest sense of the term, it was not in the twentieth century, but in the years between the death of Cromwell and the accession of Charles II, when a disorganized public opinion was being played upon and exploited by the most scandalous journalism which this country has ever known. Cromwell understood the power of the Press, as he showed by maintaining inspired journalists of his own—Henry Walker, and Marchamont Nedham, the writer of *Mercurius Politicus* and the *Publick Intelligencer*—and also by setting his “commissioners for printing” to hound out unauthorized publicists, armed with a general warrant to search and arrest, and with power to fine, imprison and flog. This is the self-protective instinct of every dictator in the world. It lies behind the modern Press Law in India. It is the token of respect which despotic government pays to its main enemy, opinion.

The condition of the Press immediately before

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and after the Restoration is an index of the change which had come over England since the reign of Henry VIII. The supreme power no longer remains unchallenged in the hands of Crown, Church or aristocracy. The Civil War had demonstrated the power of "sedition," and in 1661 we come upon an official dictum—"the dispersing of seditious books is very near akin to raising of tumults; they are as alike as brother and sister." That is a true statement of the function of the Press. In any country where the Government is not based upon consent, the natural business of the Press, or a part of it, is to preach sedition. Early in Charles II's reign tens of thousands of "seditious" letters were being sent through the post, and pamphlets which were a real danger to an intolerant Government were being printed and sold. Roger L'Estrange made it his business in life to expose libels and heresies; he persuaded the Government of the dangers of seditious literature, and at the same time created a job for himself.

Mr. George Kitchin has made it abundantly clear that the writer of *The Times* Printing Number is very far from the mark when he describes L'Estrange as "a brave and upright English gentleman, of courtly manners, well-born and well-educated, incapable of telling a lie or of committing a mean or a dishonourable action." He figured in the Civil War chiefly by his failure to take the town of King's Lynn by treachery, and later, in

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the Kentish rebellion, by his incapacity for leadership and the speediness of his flight. But in the business of journalism he proved far more efficient. He timed his return to London skilfully, and it was hinted that he commended himself to Cromwell by reason of their common liking for musical parties. At any rate, it was not till Cromwell was securely in his grave that by his zeal for the King and the Episcopal Church he "ventured hanging," as he puts it, "for his Majesty's service in these times as fair and as often perhaps as any man in the three kingdoms."

On the principle of "set a thief to catch a thief" Roger L'Estrange was the best man the Restoration Government could have found for the Surveyorship of the Press. Indeed, he was not to be gainsaid. He had been a violent pamphleteer himself, and he certainly hated the Presbyterians more than he loved Royalty. He knew intimately the habits of the Press-men of the time. He hunted out libels and schismatic utterances, and reported them to the authorities till they were compelled to listen to him. In his book *Considerations and Proposals in order to the Regulation of the Press* he laid down principles which are a direct challenge to *Areopagitica*: "The ordinary penalties I find to be these—death, mutilation, imprisonment, banishment, etc.—the offence is either Blasphemy, Heresy, Schism, Treason, Sedition, Scandal, or Contempt of Authority." No

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doubt he was the chief inspirer of the Press Act of 1662, the characteristic feature of which was the power of the general Search Warrant, that is to say, the power not only of arresting and punishing offenders, but of searching for unlicensed literature on the least reasonable or unreasonable suspicion. In 1663 he reaped his reward by receiving an official appointment as "Surveyor of the Presses." He ousted Muddiman from his monopoly of issuing the bi-weekly printed News-books, though that astute journalist was more successful with his authorized hand-written "news-letters" than the writer either of the News-book or its successor the *London Gazette*. His tenure of the News-book was short. It was sufficient to prove that he was less skilful in purveying news than in writing leading articles. But his *Declaration* on taking up the News-book is important, for it reveals the official attitude towards a free Press :—

I do declare myself (as I hope I may in a matter left so absolutely indifferent whether any or more) that supposing the Press in order, the people in their right wits and news or no news to be the question, a Public Mercury shall never have my vote, because I think it makes the multitude too familiar with the actions and counsels of their superiors, too pragmatical and censorious, and gives them not only an itch but a kind of colourable right and license to be meddling with the Government.

And he concludes his statement with an offer designed to encourage those who would "prevent mischief."

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1. To any one who discovers a private Press, hole or corner, let him repair with such notice and make proof thereof to the Surveyor of the Press (at his office over Brome's shop, the sign of the Gun in Ivy Lane) and he will get 40s. with what assurance of secrecy himself shall demand.
2. £5 is offered for discovery of such a libel in printing.
3. 10s. is offered for discovery of an unlicensed book printing.
4. 5s. is offered for discovery of a seditious book being sold by the hawkers.

L'Estrange's vindictive treatment of authors and printers was the more noteworthy because it was belated. It was a return to the methods of the Inquisition at the time when those methods were beginning to be discredited. His continuance in the Surveyorship is a more important fact for journalists than the appearance of the *Oxford Gazette*, afterwards the *London Gazette*, which in 1665 succeeded and superseded his *News* and *Intelligencer*. Our chief interest in the semi-official *London Gazette* is in the fact that it survived. But the Surveyor is important because by his professional skill and sleuth-hound intelligence he stood in a very real sense between the Court party and an increasingly hostile opinion the expression of which he to some extent stifled. Nothing was needed but a big sensational event to arouse public opinion and carry it forward on a wave which no organized loyalism could resist. That event was provided by Titus Oates and the Popish Plot. Popular indignation was ridiculously

but irresistibly aroused. L'Estrange was swept away and put to flight. At the same time (1679) Parliament refused to renew the iniquitous Press Act. The Press was for a moment free again as it had been in the interregnum. "Loyal Protestants" and enemies of the monarchy alike might utter any sedition they liked ; they might be prosecuted under the Common Law ; but juries refused to find them guilty.

When L'Estrange returned in 1681 he was compelled to resort to the methods, not of compulsion, but of persuasion. If he succeeded at last in pouring ridicule on the Popish Plot it was because he understood the methods of the journalists ; because in his new paper the *Observator* he proved himself as good a journalist as the best of them. From 1681 to 1695 is not a far cry. The spirit which lay behind the panic outcry of 1679 was a symptom of the spirit which ejected James II from the throne and accomplished the Revolution. The constitutional Revolution had been announced by the violence of the Civil War and the execution of Charles. Those were facts which announced the danger of any too palpable flouting of public feeling. In the intervening period of forty years the pamphleteers and the journalists, in the face of Cromwell's Commissioners and Roger L'Estrange, had been writing and wrangling their way towards the assertion of a principle. That principle is the principle of the English Constitution. It asserts the triumph

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of Locke, the doctrinaires, and a theory of liberty and toleration. It was mainly a theory, but it was a theory worth having. The Press Act was dropped for ever in 1695. And a little later David Hume, a brilliant philosopher and a credulous doctrinaire, was congratulating his countrymen on "the extreme liberty, which we enjoy in this country, of communicating whatever we please to the public, and of openly censuring every measure, entered into by the King or his ministers." With 1689 and 1695 began the modern epoch of compromise.

## CHAPTER V.

### ENGLAND IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

JOURNALISM, to-day, is recognized as an uncertain and perilous profession, and in some respects it is more like the journalism of the seventeenth century than that of the Victorian era. But during the greater part of the seventeenth century there were few moments of relaxation in the anxieties of a Press-man's life. Bankruptcy or a criminal libel action is the worst that is likely to befall a modern editor, but every time those early journalists took up their pens they were face to face with the real danger of imprisonment, flogging, or even death. Cromwell's commissioners and L'Estrange's spies were ever ready to hunt out the unlicensed pamphlet, and had a keen nose for opinions that scented of blasphemy or sedition. Whether men wrote to express their opinions, or to make money, or for both these ends, the peril was the same. Every page multiplied by print was a possible menace to the State; for it tended to bring men together upon some line of thought, to organize opinion in some definite way; it constituted a rallying point against arbitrary and irresponsible government. A govern-

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ment that actually wished to be as irresponsible as possible, that is to say, free from independent criticism, must necessarily attempt to subdue the Press. The extent to which the journalists succeeded in asserting themselves was a measure of the dependence of government upon outside opinion. The seventeenth century in England was a time of prolonged war, which became actual war under the Long Parliament; but no less real were the incessant struggles of the journalists to inform their clients, to focus outraged opinion, to assert both the rights and the power of opinion. The demonstration of the power of Parliament in 1641 was instantly followed by the publication of Parliamentary reports. In 1641 the revolt was against an arbitrary Crown; in 1688 it was against the concentration of power in the hands of the Court and a Cavalier aristocracy. In the latter year it seemed as if the victory was won. James II had fled the country. William and Mary ascended the throne as representatives of a public opinion which favoured them. Monarchs were to be henceforth "constitutional monarchs," acting upon the advice of a Parliament which in theory represented the people. No need to coerce the Press, for "toleration" was of the essence of the Constitution. The philosophy of Locke was in the ascendant. Society existed by virtue of the social contract; mankind had contracted itself out of the state of nature in order to enjoy those lofty civic rights which were based

upon the general will. Government was to exist to express the will of the people, and the elaborate system of balances and checks by which King, Lords and Commons were to keep one another from misrepresenting the nation, found its obvious complement in the Press.

The fury of religious controversy had at length worn itself out. Church and Crown in strong alliance had done their utmost to coerce and break a critical and outspoken Press. King and Anglicanism went down together in the Puritan Revolution, and a new government, supporting a new religion, found it harder than ever to suppress controversy and print. But when the throne was occupied by a monarch who was on the whole indifferent to religion, and so far from being devoted to the established Church was secretly inclined to Catholicism, it was obvious that dogmatic coercion must soon disappear. The reign of Charles II sounded the death-knell of the religious Middle Ages ; James II administered the final blow. Professedly a Roman Catholic, the monarch was at length openly at variance with the established religion. Puritans and Anglicans were for the first time allies against the government. Hence the abdication of James, a truce in the wars of religion, and a weakening in the claims of the religious dogmatist to control absolutely the thoughts and actions of men. The Church would often again figure in political controversy, but an ecclesiastical polity had become a thing

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of the past. The State had become secularized. It had to admit freedom of religious opinion, because such freedom of opinion had actually asserted itself; because the opinions formerly suppressed had proved too strong. The writers of news-letters, of corantos, of diurnals, of newspapers had seen to that. They had prevailed because those whom they expressed, and for whom they wrote, had, partly through them, and partly through the general educative influence of books, entered into the commonwealth of organized opinion. At the end of the seventeenth century the men who habitually read books and journals were the men who made public opinion, the men whom, to some extent, statesmen were compelled to reckon with.

One element in mediaevalism had vanished, save as a picturesque survival, a decoration to aristocracy, and an opportunity of patronage. The Church was to become again a powerful instrument of fashion and snobbery, but not a physical tyrant, nor yet an influence coextensive with mental culture. But there was another mediaeval element which survived in the feudal aristocracy. It was indeed corrupt, but it was rich and powerful. It could not win men's souls by persuasion, but it could buy them. The Revolution of 1689 had been a compromise. It was a compromise between the religious sects, which agreed to tolerate one another so long as Romanism was left powerless. It was also a compromise between the Crown and the partially edu-

cated middle-classes ; and as the Crown was for some time held by foreigners, and the middle classes had not made up their minds what they wanted, it was the intermediate class, that of the great aristocratic families, which held the balance of power. Their supremacy was promoted by the intellectual habits of the time. Former controversies about the administering of the sacrament were more disturbing to the peace than the new controversies about the origin of the State. Men who had employed their zeal in examining ecclesiastical pretensions were now free to employ their wits in admiring the theory of the Constitution. In the early eighteenth century culture took the place of zeal. Polish was imported from France. The ancients furnished the models of style, and manner was more criticized than matter. Neither politics nor literature appeared to call forth the great passions, for great passions have no place in an age which has settled a war of principles by a genial compromise. The eighteenth century was, on the literary side, an age of elegance and wit, gossip and story-telling. Erudition was the veneer which scarcely served to cover the main purposes of the ruling classes—to profit by the boom of commerce, to profit by government, to grow powerful or rich at any cost.

American journalism begins at the close of the seventeenth century. We shall see that, beginning from the same sources as English journalism, it was very soon to take a divergent path. For journal-

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ism follows the development of the society for which it exists. It is made by that society, and in turn makes it, and reflects its most essential features. England and America were to travel far apart before their civilizations approached each other again at the end of the nineteenth century. The ruling class in England in the eighteenth century was the Whig aristocracy; in the nineteenth century the upper middle-classes assumed the dominant position. The United States were never dominated by either of these essentially English institutions. But to-day both England and America are trying to become democratic, and for that reason the journalism of the one country more closely resembles the journalism of the other. The traditions, however, are different. The societies are still different. And for these reasons there is still a difference in their newspapers and magazines.

After the Revolution the English periodical Press tended to become definitely a party Press. It was no longer a case of the journalists *versus* the government, but of the journalists supporting or denouncing one side or another of a ruling class. The fundamental opposition had disappeared—despotic rule *versus* representative government, ecclesiastical supremacy *versus* toleration. Representative government and toleration seemed to have won the day, and that apparent triumph satisfied the English people for a century. Allowance must be made for that ingrained British snobbish-

ness, which is not wholly an invention of recent times. Literate English people—the people who read the papers—would not be quick to see through a representative system which gave all the power to the aristocracy. The commercial classes desired a strong government, which could keep the peace at home and wage predatory wars abroad. Lawyers, clergymen, civil servants, state pensioners, and dons—the class of people exactly corresponding to those who support the most respectable penny evening papers to-day—were then, as now, moderately content with the permanent mock-warfare of party disputes—disputes, that it to say, about matters of secondary importance, often factitious, instead of disputes about fundamental matters. The latter are preferably kept out of sight. They are only discovered by imaginative and sympathetic people, or in the strong light of revolutions. The English nation had *had* a revolution, and it considered that one revolution was enough for a century ; it was a small minority, in England, which was anxious to welcome Jacobite Pretenders ; there were probably none who would have recalled the Levellers. The rich aristocracy assumed political power, men of sober erudition and polish assumed the lead in the literary and intellectual sphere, and most of the journalists, men of their own generation, performed their proper function—proper to that time—they took sides in ephemeral party disputes with all the acrimony and bitterness which they inherited from a more vital age.

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And so the papers which sprang into existence with the new era were party papers. The *Post-boy*, which in 1695 became the *Post-man*, was a Tory paper. So also was the new *Post-boy*, which was started in the same year. The *Flying-Post* came out in the Whig interest a few days later, and was published three times a week. At the same time it was soon evident that the demand for mere news was becoming more imperative. People wanted to hear the gossip of the Court, the news from France, with which country we were soon to be again at war, and the sensations of the moment. The coffee-houses—centres of gossip—were promoting a demand for the latest topic of conversation. Thus it was that the first daily paper in England did not appear as one of the great journals of opinion, or one of the inspired organizers of a great news service. The *Daily Courant*, which was first published on March 11, 1702, was a small paper which, with its single page of two columns, catered in the scantiest way for the latest gossip, and did not profess to have any political views. The daily papers of the eighteenth century were not “the great daily papers” until the arrival of *The Times* and the *Morning Post*. The significant and characteristic journalism of the eighteenth century was that represented by the political and literary reviews.

Defoe is constantly alluded to as the “father of modern journalism.” By this it is probably meant

that he possessed to an extraordinary degree what we should now call the “journalistic sense,” and he was sufficiently prolific and original to carry out his own ideas with his own pen, and with sufficient rapidity to fill his journals. His first object was to interest his readers, his second to influence them. It was he who really created the topical article. The event of the moment interested him, excited him, and he had ready to his hand a store of information, which, tricked out by his nimble imagination, provided the public instantly with a story or an article on just the subject which every one was discussing. His interests were political, but he was a journalist even before he was a politician. Just as he could turn any event of contemporary interest into a fascinating story—if he had lived to-day Captain Scott’s adventures would have moved him to a romance, just as Alexander Selkirk’s sojourn at Juan Fernandez spurred him to write *Robinson Crusoe*—so the politics of the moment supplied him with bi-weekly sensations. “What if the Queen should die?” “What if the Pretender should come?” He proved himself willing to write on both sides, but when once he had a pen in his hand he was wholly daring. After he had been fined and imprisoned he was not afraid to challenge again the discomforts of Newgate. He compelled people to be interested. He made party politics exciting and fascinating. He stimulated opinion about “affairs.” He provoked opposition.

In a certain sense there was no one who could oppose him on his own ground. The only writer who could make the same quick and ready appeal *ad populum* was Richard Steele, and Steele was less concerned with politics, and more interested in broadly human topics. Swift's writings in *The Examiner* are far finer as literature, and under the Dean's control that journal had an unequalled circulation. But it was addressed to the "cultured" class, to the powers that be. Swift made no attempt, as Defoe had done, to interest that unknown outside public. His wit was too intellectual, his method too fine, to appeal to the class that was merely literate rather than educated. It was not till Wilkes demonstrated in the *North Briton* that the large, unknown, incalculable and half-educated class was becoming conscious of its power that the greater journalists addressed themselves to the task of shaping its opinions. The efforts of men like Wilkes, and, at the end of the century, that far more powerful writer, Cobbett, are to some extent foreshadowed in the eager journalism of Daniel Defoe.

But English journalism owes a great deal to the easy-going times of the early eighteenth century. It was, as I have said, an age of truce and compromise. It was possible for the greatest writers on opposite sides, such as Swift and Addison, to be on terms of intimate friendship. At a time when popular passions were not deeply roused, journalists

could appeal to the intellect rather than to passion, and use the fine weapons of satire and irony. There has been much talk in England about the dignity and responsibility of the Press. There are a few journalists living to-day who would restrict newspaper criticism to decorous debating arguments and superfine "Parliamentary" manners. Well, there was fire enough in the articles of Swift and Bolingbroke, and witty illumination in Addison and Steele; but these men moderated the pace. They depended on argument, not on ranting. They wrote for adult minds, not for political children. They preserved and helped to create the form of the English language, realizing that style, for those who know how to read, insinuates itself into the mind, and gives the impression of power and character.

It was an aristocratic age, and therefore an age of leisure. The cultured did not trouble themselves about that possible maelstrom of life which might one day whirl forth from the lower-middle and working classes. They never could have conceived that the Gordon riots might prove so annoying, or that the American colonies could so profoundly nurse a grievance, or so drastically remove it. The art of life was to be abundantly concerned with the affairs that minister to pleasure. And so we got the superbly disinterested writing of Addison and Steele in the *Spectator*—disinterested in the sense that they were never carried

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away from their pleasing and self-sufficient topics by the worrying interest of insoluble problems. All available problems were soluble in the early eighteenth century, for the simple reason that none but half-problems were ever stated. Even in philosophy Berkeley and Hume could rest content with their opposite theories of abstract ideas and of a stream of disconnected impressions, and philosophy could go no farther until the problem was restated by Kant. There seemed nothing which could reasonably be expected to upset, fundamentally, the existing scheme of creation—unless it were a Jacobite invasion ; and even that, in time, came to be a sort of game of play. Were not the songs about King Charles and “his own again” too jolly ever to have meant anything very serious?

This aristocratic eighteenth century was an age of respite. It developed taste. It developed an intensive faculty for appreciating the narrower sphere of life's energies. Men were obliged to take a great deal of interest in the scansion of a line or the turn of a sentence, when, without such interests, there would not be enough to absorb them. The reading public was getting accustomed to the trickle of news which ran through the coffee-house papers ; they developed the habit of looking for witty, incisive, rational criticisms such as the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, the *Examiner* and the *Craftsman* had set up as models. They learnt also to appreciate the excitement of stirring,

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anonymous criticism. Half the interest in the letters of Junius lay in their concealed authorship. In these gossiping and arguing days of the eighteenth century there was growing up a journalistic habit—a habit of writing and a habit of reading. An instrument was being made and sharpened. Certain traditions were being established. The journalists and the public were being prepared to make and receive *The Times*.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AMERICA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

JOURNALISM of the kind that was developing in eighteenth century England found no congenial home in America. Scarcely had printed periodicals established themselves there before they became involved in a revolutionary movement destined to separate the States from England and apply the spark which exploded the French Revolution. At the time when the English Press was waging its keenest warfare against repression no journals whatsoever were being published in the Colonies. Such papers as were read were papers brought over from England. An attempt to publish a newspaper in Boston in 1689 was instantly suppressed by the Governor. On the accession of James II the fanatical Benjamin Harris had been compelled to fly from England and take refuge in Boston. He had been an Anabaptist bookseller, writer and publisher of *Domestic Intelligence*, an unlicensed paper in which he led the way in supporting Titus Oates and spreading the fiction of the Popish Plot.<sup>1</sup> The first

<sup>1</sup> See *Times* Printing Number, 10 September, 1912, "Titus Oates's Journalists."

American journal owes its existence to the *cacoethes scribendi* of this inveterate pamphleteer, who endeavoured to dispose of his wares to an unenthusiastic colony. The meagre reports which appeared in his *Publick Occurrences* (1690) were not calculated to set the Thames, or the Charles River, on fire. But in bringing an injudicious charge against Louis XIV he incurred the wrath of the Governor. Just as the English *Corantos* were suppressed in 1632 because they gave offence to Spain, so *Publick Occurrences* was obnoxious because it insulted the French monarch. "It contained," said the Governor, "reflections of a very high nature," and Harris's Boston venture was suppressed.

No other journal appeared till the *Boston News-Letter* was started in 1704. It was written by John Campbell, the postmaster of the city, who filled his pages mainly with excerpts from the English papers. In 1719 it still existed, and Campbell prided himself on bringing it more up to date—"this time twelve-months we were thirteen months behind with the foreign news beyond Great Britain . . . and now less than five months." In 1719 the *Boston Gazette* was first published with official sanction; in 1727 the *Maryland Gazette* was founded; and in 1736 appeared the *Virginia Gazette*.

So far there had been little that was really characteristic of America, still less national. The early colonists were far from averse to literature, and the

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quickly won prestige of Harvard was enough to show that education was valued certainly not less than in the mother country. But there had been nothing to create the violent politico-religious controversies which had torn England in the seventeenth century. There had been no Catholic Middle Ages in America leaving pontifical authority as a legacy to the secular State. There were dogmatic differences. There was a public opinion which reflected these differences. But the State, represented by an English Governor, stood aloof. Religion, at any rate, was no ground for running into journalistic polemics. Nor was there, in the early stages of the American colonies, the same necessity for journalism as there was in England. America was not yet a nation. The colonies, afterwards to be States, were not yet united. Massachusetts had little in common with New York, and less with Virginia. The population of any one of these colonies, taken by itself, was small. It was not larger than that of many ancient city-States, which preserved their common stock of ideas and their cohesion without any printing press. Such news as it was vital for the colonists to hear could be reported by word of mouth almost as effectually as through printed sheets.

Each of these comparatively small communities, comprised within a single colony, was a homogeneous organism. The spirited, urbane aristocracy of Virginia, which was to produce a Washington, had

little in common with the sober, straitlaced folk of Boston, which was to produce a John Adams. But within the borders of Massachuséts, or within Virginia, there was strong community of feeling. The very rivalries between the States tended to consolidate the people within each separate State. The members of a small and homogeneous community can keep sufficiently in touch with one another to be informed about matters of vital common interest ; public opinion was a real thing ; and in moments of crisis the representatives in the Assemblies really represented their constituents.

Nor must it be supposed that the English Governors either wished or were able to control the colonies as if they were satrapies. No Governor was so well supported from the mother country that he could afford to ignore lightly the good-will of the colonists, or to defy the Assemblies. In the southern colonies the Governors generally endeavoured to keep on friendly terms with the large land-owners. George Washington to the last preserved cordial relations with the Governor of Virginia. In Massachusetts, if the friendly feeling was not always so apparent, public opinion and the Assembly were proportionately stronger. When the English Government decided to make the colonies contribute to the expenses of the French wars, it was the ignorance of the home Government, and not of their representatives in America, which led them to the outrage of colonial

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feeling. Until the middle of the eighteenth century each colony enjoyed a large measure of independence and self-government. Public opinion was a much more real thing than it was in England. It more easily manifested itself ; it more readily resulted in action—and this without widely circulated newspapers such as in England catered for the aristocracy, the erudite, and the politicals rather than for the nation. The English nation in the eighteenth century did not rule itself. It was ruled by a clique. The people of an American colony were much more truly represented in such public life as the colony possessed.

This independence could be enjoyed as long as it manifested itself without friction. But let the friction come, and repression would follow. But a people nursed on freedom, united also by the bond of common habits and interests, would resist all the more strenuously. The earliest printed journals had been little more than a luxury imported from England. The two Franklins, James and Benjamin, started newspapers mainly because they were printers who happened to have observed that journalism flourished in England. When James Franklin started the *New England Courier* in 1727 he was attempting to create a kind of American *Tatler*, just as many attempts were made at a later date to create an American *Punch*. Benjamin Franklin started the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1729 in the same spirit in

which he endeavoured to promote many other social improvements. In 1727 the *New England Journal* set out in a fighting spirit to champion the cause of Whitefield. But it was really not till 1748 that the *Independent Advertiser* endeavoured to make itself a spokesman of discontent in Massachusetts. Samuel Adams was one of the writers, and he and his colleagues did not hesitate to denounce the Governor and to assert the rights of the colonists. Seven years later the *Boston Gazette* became an even more outspoken champion of the popular cause, and it included among its contributors John Adams as well as Samuel Adams. At this time there still seemed to be much that was doctrinaire in the rights they asserted, the privileges which they denounced. They appealed to a comparatively small and cultured circle rather than to the mass of the people, who had not yet nursed a grievance nor developed an angry discontent. Their tone and spirit was all their own ; but in their methods they were still adopting the methods of England.

Perhaps the paper which should be called the first really representative, characteristic, and even national paper is the *Massachusetts Spy*. It first appeared when the indignation against the home Government was coming to a head. It abandoned the sober, rational, and dignified methods of the *Boston Gazette*. It set out to interest and capture the average, hard-headed, half-educated American,

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the "man-in-the-street," as we call him now. It boldly preached the necessity of war. It told the colonists to stand by one another, and act together. It was violent in its language, simple and audacious in its appeal. It used the language which average Americans could understand ; it spoke to them in terms familiar to them ; it was home grown. It was the first popular American paper.

From this time onwards the colonies, or, as they are soon to be called, the States, continued to go more and more their own way. The war brought a cessation of close intercourse with England. English Governors ceased to be leaders of society. Young men were no longer sent across the Atlantic to complete their education. The American War of Independence marks the parting of the ways. Culture in the States was now to be American culture. The popular feeling which had been so forcibly asserted became more and more distinctively American feeling. An aristocracy of the English kind had no chance to take root. The nation was founded upon a popular impulse and with a common purpose based upon the recognition of the freedom and equality of citizens. What the French Revolution asserted without achieving the Americans seemed to have achieved before they asserted it. At the end of the century the Union of States had really more of the true character of a democracy than she or any other country has had since. The Press was in the nature of things not

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only completely free, but it was not restrained by traditions, or hampered by snobbishness. The people of America, spreading ever westwards, constantly recruited from every country in Europe, yet far removed from the news and the culture of Europe, were still an unfixed and an unknown quantity. The working of their Constitution was untested. The far-western lands they were to occupy were still unclaimed. Their industry was yet to be built up, their social problems to be discovered, their character and habits to be shifted and sifted, and made into something national. There was a clean slate for the Press of America ; something was to be written on it ; with so much that was unknown and various there was also an unparalleled opening for the speculator.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ADVENT OF *THE TIMES*.

IT is not my business in this book to present a continuous history of the Press. I am concerned at this stage only with those general principles, those tendencies, which emerge from the history of printing and enable us to see its function. If we follow in detail the life of this journal or of that, watching its appearance, its period of prosperity, and its disappearance, we may fill up the register of facts, and convince ourselves of the futility of the greater part of human effort. So much of it was destined to be drowned in oblivion; but, fortunately for themselves, there are many journalists who, accustomed to anonymity, yet believing that they contribute to history, await with fortitude the indifference of the historian. The cynical may even observe with pleasure that the portentous greatness of *The Times* grew out of a bankruptcy and an ingenuous fad. If the first John Walter had never been made bankrupt by the American War, and, if he had never conceived the impracticable idea of setting up type by words instead of letters, we should never have had that *Daily Universal Register* which

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became *The Times*. It was not the least of the results of that war—the forerunner of the French Revolution—that it sent John Walter bankrupt. It was the fantastic obstinacy of that able man which made his logographic press an occasion and excuse for *The Times*.

The influence of periodicals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be appreciated unless we consider the diffusion of other literature and the conditions of society. It is a fact of supreme importance for the whole world that England had her violent domestic upheaval in the seventeenth century, whereas in other countries that upheaval was postponed to the end of the eighteenth or the middle of the nineteenth century. Whole-hearted admirers of “constitutional” government rejoice that the English House of Commons entered early upon the task of controlling administration. Those who do not find in it a panacea for all evils must observe that our revolution was premature. A popular grievance was mingled and confused with sectarian grievances. The settlement of the latter concealed the fact that the former remained unsettled ; that in fact, as opposed to theory, there had been little beyond a change of masters, the legalized despotism of a few being substituted for the illegal despotism of one. It is true, those “few”—the Whig aristocracy—were now exposed to a public criticism which was expressed with some freedom. But the public itself—that

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portion of it at least which was articulate, which has left a written record of itself—seemed to have been hypnotized by the constitutional Revolution of 1689. Men really thought that in this “Constitution” England possessed the machinery for freedom; they directed themselves to the criticism of Ministries rather than to criticism of the system; they really thought that because they had had a revolution the main ends of revolution had been accomplished; and it became the fashion, existing to this day, to praise a Parliamentary system which in theory unites continuity with change, which is stable, yet progressive, which represents a sublime balance of power between King, Lords, and Commons, the whole exposed to the critical influence of the Fourth Estate. It was the compromise of 1689 which appealed to a nation which loves compromise and hates an unnecessary fuss. Having achieved something, English opinion in the eighteenth century was hypnotized into believing that it had achieved all. The responsibility for the vast hypocrisy behind the Bill of Rights and the system which followed it rests, if not with the nation as a whole, at least with the upper class which profited by it, and with the middle class which accepted and was duped by it.

The difference between England and France in the eighteenth century, between a nation that had grown complacent and a nation that knew its own disorder, is represented by the difference between

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Burke and Rousseau. Burke, indeed, was an Irishman, but he was one of those many Irishmen who have existed to formulate an English case. He was extraordinarily clear-sighted and, in a certain sense, imaginative. He was right about the American Colonies at a time when most people were wrong. He denounced the corruption of the governments of his time, and knew that Englishmen were not represented in the House of Commons. He saw the abuse of privilege against which the French rebelled, though he denounced the revolutionary excesses which set up an example of anarchy and threatened law and order in every country. But we see that he condemned the taxation of the American Colonies mainly because it conflicted with the established *principle* of taxation without representation ; that he denounced corruption, whether it was practised by the King's men or by an aristocratic clique, because it destroyed the just balance of power in the State ; that he railed against the French Revolution, because it threatened the sacred edifice of law and order. Burke gave his whole mind and heart to the worship of institutions. He built up a symmetrical theory of the English Constitution based, not upon what it might be, but upon what legally and traditionally it was. What he attacked was never the English system of Government, but the abuses of it ; he would clear away the impurities from an organism which, to his mind, was in itself pure.

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Proclaiming the virtues of tradition and continuous development, presenting his picture of a magnificent structure in his own structure of magnificent prose, he, more than any one man, reconciled the willing Englishman to contentment with a slow-working, easily rusted machine which always worked just fast enough to avoid revolution. He is probably the only sublime advocate of caution and compromise in the whole of literature. He set the reputation of English common sense upon a pedestal from which a century of criticism has hardly shaken it.

Rousseau, belonging to a country which had not learnt the lesson of compromise, preferred to go to the very root of the matter. It was not in his nature to prop up the house that was tottering. He would pull it down, in the hope of building up afresh. He did not ask whether men were being governed according to the proper rules of government, but whether they were being governed as they wished to be. He denied that the social contract was an immutable bargain by which men had sold away their rights. The rights of man were a condition of the compact between rulers and ruled, and it was the general will of the people which alone could confer the privilege of government, just as it alone could determine the rights of the individual. In effect Rousseau was not attempting to mend the French social system, but to end it. Himself a creature of impulse and imagination, he

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excited the French nation to that impulsive and imaginative orgy which transformed Europe. Burke made his appeal to practical common sense, Rousseau to the imagination. Burke stood for safety, Rousseau for daring. Law and order and the British Constitution turn for guidance to Burke ; Rousseau is the eternal outlaw who is for ever being repressed and for ever bursting out in renewed vigour.

But another difference between Burke and Rousseau is that Burke exists for his own country alone, whereas Rousseau, or Rousseau-ism, exists for the whole world. Englishmen experienced some spiritual after-glow from the flame of the Revolution. Wordsworth was to preach Man and Nature, Shelley the Rights of Man, and Cobbett and lesser luminaries like Godwin were to carry the war into the sphere of politics and journalism. When once the French Revolution had appeared, more ominous than the celestial portent which terrified Attila, all that it stood for, its indestructible spirit, its dynamic ideal, its waywardness, its recklessness, its passionate caprice, were to remain for ever before the eyes of the world. The spectre of it has floated over Europe, a lasting memorial of what must happen to a nation whose government ignores the public opinion of that nation, a public opinion created by common discontents and the common knowledge of them focussed and brought to a point by the dissemination of ideas. That spirit inevitably

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came into England as it went into every country of the world. But just as it failed to convulse America because she thought she had already gained everything for which the Revolution stood—George Washington standing like a guardian deity before his States, to protect them from excesses of Rousseau-ism—so also in England Pitt stood immovable. We may well ask how it was that England, which for a century had enjoyed a comparatively free Press, where literature had flourished, where there was a considerable opinion which could be called “cultivated,” and a proletariat which was aware of poverty—how was it that the arrival of the Revolution *furore* failed to stir England to the destruction of Pitt?

The answer is that there was now an *official opposition* in England, an opposition informed by the spirit of Burke, and to be incarnated in the newspaper so skilfully conducted by the family of John Walter. Since 1689 England had plumped for compromise. Burke had provided a philosophical confirmation of that common-sense resolve. The safety-valve had been made ready. When the steam in the social boiler was compressed to bursting-point—let out a little party politics, and the engine was saved! Divert the attention of men from the supreme issue, and catastrophe was avoided. William Pitt and his associates little realized that the bold criticism of *The Times* and those with whom John Walter stood, was the sort

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of criticism that saved England from revolution, from the terrible chemistry of vital ideas. For *The Times* was thus far in agreement with the Government of Pitt—it wanted to preserve the British Constitution. The opponents differed about party politics ; they were agreed about the fundamentals of the State.

John Walter then, and his capable son, the second John Walter, were the last men who would have resorted to that extreme criticism which we find in the writings of Godwin or Cobbett. They were not afraid to inveigh against the repressive policy of Pitt, to denounce the burden of expenditure he laid upon the country, or to expose the administration of Lord Melville. But they never outraged average opinion. They never went outside Burke's theory of the Constitution. Their controversies lay within the circle of party politics.

They were effective in criticism because they had the genius to realize that information is the basis of opinion. Given their organizing capacity and practical insight, the success of *The Times* was assured. If the Walter family had not seized the favourable moment, some one else must have founded the inevitable national organ. For it was inevitable. There were three cogent reasons why a *Times* should rise to power at the end of the eighteenth century, just as we shall see that there were cogent reasons why a *Daily Mail* should arise a century later.

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I. In the later decades of the eighteenth century there was a literate public waiting for *The Times*. That century had been an age of great literary activity, not perhaps in the production of inspired literature, but of literature which was zestful, fastidious, or intellectual. There had been many foreign wars, but the country itself had developed the arts of peace. The commercial classes had prospered. They enjoyed wealth, a certain amount of leisure, education according to their means and their tastes, and opportunity for gossip galore. Books were now to be found in every middle-class home. The young women became, as they still are, omnivorous readers of novels, and even formed reading circles to one of which the young Jane Austen said she was not ashamed to belong. The men who lived in towns found periodicals supplied to them in all the coffee-houses, or later, in the clubs which superseded them. Among the middle classes the reading habit had been developed. They were accustomed to weekly dissertations on party politics, and devoured such news as they could obtain from the party newspapers—how inadequate that was we can see from the fact that nearly all the letter-writers and memoirists of the period quote personal informants about public events far more often than they quote periodical journals. Gossip was abundant because regular authentic news was scanty.

There was thus a variety of middle-class opinion partially but inadequately catered for by the period-

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ical Press, the opinion of a class outside aristocratic circles, but which then as now liked to believe that it was not very far removed from the aristocracy. For this reason it was easily imposed upon by the current theory of Parliamentary Government, though some of those constitutionally trampled upon knew that they and their kind had no effective voice in the control of the country. All middle-class Englishmen had grounds of complaint against the incidence of taxation, and they grumbled then as they do now. They disliked an officialdom which hunted for agitators even more than they disliked agitators. They had become, rather by custom than zeal, firm adherents of the Protestant religion, and they refused to shake off their suspicion of Roman Catholic intrigues.

And this was the class from which at the turn of the century the great manufacturers and the industrialists were to be drawn. The time was beginning when the great landed proprietors no longer held the main wealth of the country in their hands. The factories were springing into being, new fortunes were being accumulated, the capitalist was becoming a great employer of labour. There was a boom in trade, and the industrial middle classes, acquiring a vast stake in the country, became more and more interested in the stability and therefore in the policy of Governments. They wanted to be informed about affairs, they wanted a medium for advertising their manufactured wares, and they

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were in the mood to listen to congenial criticism. There existed, then, near the end of the eighteenth century, a fairly well educated and growing middle-class which had hitherto not been adequately expressed in periodical literature, nor adequately represented in public life; which had a rapidly increasing stake in the country; which required news; which afforded the substratum of a sufficiently solid "public opinion." Here was a great class waiting to be supplied by the most efficient, common-sense journalism which could be produced.

II. Disasters and tragedies have often been the making of newspapers. The fortune of *The Times* was made in the early stages of its existence, by the outbreak of a prolonged war which devastated Europe and enriched Great Britain. Wars have profoundly affected journalism. We have seen that the publication of the earliest periodicals, the *Corantos*, were occasioned by the interest which Englishmen took in the German wars. We shall see that the War of the Rebellion synchronized with a great outburst of journalistic energy in America, and that the *Daily Mail* and the English half-penny Press came in on the tide of the South African War. The French Revolution shook England from her eighteenth century lethargy. The great war into which the country was plunged aroused not only the excitement which a mighty struggle near at home must always occasion, but touched closely the pockets of Englishmen. Every one

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wanted to hear news of battles. On the south coast, before the battle of Trafalgar, men were actually expecting invasion. Hundreds of thousands of people had friends and relatives who were at sea with the fleet or in the field with the army. The policy of Napoleon had no effect in checking British trade. Whilst other countries were at a standstill in the development of industry, and were actually shut off from the sea-trade of the world, in England factories were multiplied and strained to feverish energy, and English ships were carrying cargoes to all the markets of the world. Every one except the labourer and the hapless mill-hand was interested in news of the war, whether from the love of sensation, the love of friends, or the love of gain. A paper which could secure an effective service of war news was certain to prosper.

III. It was an age of mechanical inventions. In modern journalism the race is to the quickest, and it is impossible to extend the circulation of a daily paper unless the copies can be quickly printed off. The *Daily Universal Register* was started in 1785 largely to prove the merits of the logographic method of printing. In 1788 *The Times*, as it was then named, was still printed logographically, but this method was soon abandoned, either because it was not good, or because it was strenuously opposed by the printing trade. The second John Walter applied himself continually to the improvement of his printing processes. Circulations in

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those days were not what they are now, and, as yet very far from the great budget of sixteen pages, *The Times* was content to give its four pages a day. In 1814 the application of steam to printing became an accomplished fact, and in that year John Walter adopted the Koenig press, which was described in his paper as "a system of machinery, almost organic . . . which, while it relieves the human frame of its most laborious efforts in printing, far exceeds all human powers in rapidity and dispatch." With the Koenig press copies could be multiplied in less than a quarter of the time required by the hand process.

The Walters proved equal to this three-fold task. They addressed themselves to the public which was waiting for them with admirable journalistic judgment. They appealed especially to the more solid element in the middle classes. They were dignified, solemn and critical. They did not hesitate to attack with vigour, but their criticism was never convulsive. They did not indulge in new, unheard-of, original comment, but they said those severe things which men were saying already, so that readers were delighted with their own perspicacity in having already thought the things which *The Times* thundered out day by day.

And it fulfilled its second function in a manner hitherto undreamt of in journalism. It was the first paper in the world which really organized a universal news service. It kept in touch with

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home politics at the centre. It had its agents and its special correspondents abroad, and so skilfully arranged means for transmitting dispatches that though constantly opposed and thwarted by the Government, it sometimes anticipated it in the receipt of important news. Henry Crabb Robinson, famous as the first of war correspondents, was employed in the Peninsula, and it was *The Times* which published the first news of the battle of Waterloo. It was not only copious and resourceful in its supply of news; it took the utmost pains to verify its information, and to present it with authority. From the first it laid the foundation of that great reputation for accuracy and inspired information which has given to the word of *The Times* a kind of semi-official guarantee. Whilst the second John Walter applied his active energies to the whole organization, he gave a free hand to the Editors whom he appointed—Sir John Stoddart in 1810 and Thomas Barnes in 1816—and he employed in Edward Sterling a leader-writer who was in the closest touch with politicians and effective in the use of his pen. Before the end of George III's reign the paper was recognized as a great power in the land. It was already read with a confidence bordering on superstition, and statesmen were anxious to keep on good terms with it. Men in high political circles found it worth their while to initiate the Editor into their secrets, knowing that he would divulge them only at the proper time.

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In 1830 Brougham sent to Barnes and demanded to be told who had "libelled the Duchess of Kent," being evidently aware that the alleged libel would not have appeared except on a high authority. In 1832 Lord Durham was "hand in glove," as Creevey says, with Barnes, and wrote constantly for *The Times*. Later, under the great Delane (1841-1877), sources of information opened themselves to *The Times* as to no other paper. Its foreign correspondence was organized much as the diplomatic service is organized, experienced men being appointed to correspond from countries which they knew, whilst subordinates were promoted as in the official services. Great names are associated with those anonymous columns—those of Delane himself, Blowitz, and Russell, the Crimean War correspondent—but the unsigned report was enough. What *The Times* said on any important matter was listened to all over Europe.

And the Walters were equal to the task of keeping abreast or ahead of their rivals in the use of new mechanical inventions. The production of a newspaper is a branch of industry. It is supremely important that paper and printing should be good, and rapidity of printing is fundamental. After the Koenig press had been installed at Printing House Square in 1814, John Walter employed two inventors, Applegath and Cowper, to take charge of his engineering department. In 1827 a new press was introduced. In 1848 the first rotary machine

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was set up capable of printing 10,000 copies an hour. Meantime the telegraph had revolutionized the supply of news. The penny post had cheapened the transmission of letters. The railways had made it possible for papers to be delivered at an early hour all over the country. *The Times* had had the first great start; and therefore at the first it profited more than any other paper by new mechanical inventions.

There were other papers—papers of distinction—but in the course of time all the great dailies owed their success to the fact that in certain essentials they modelled themselves upon *The Times*. The *Morning Post* was founded as early as 1772, and at the beginning of the new century it had many brilliant features which *The Times* had no ambition to emulate. It is to the credit of that paper that it should have employed Coleridge, whose talk and lectures were a delight, but who, for most persons, was a weariness to the flesh when he wrote prose—and prose to order! Southey wrote for the *Morning Post*; and Southey was a conscientious, much-enduring journalist with a reputation to maintain. Then, as now, that paper has given encouragement to the poets whom all the world has acclaimed, and it published some of the best of Wordsworth's poems just as lately it has published some of the worst of Mr. Kipling's. But journalism has never prospered on poets or poetry, excepting when it has been favoured, as *Punch* has been,

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by the comic Muse with a sense for the practical. And the *Morning Post* never flourished, in a commercial sense, till it adapted itself to the tastes of the aristocracy, and supplied them with the news which they desired. It had to learn the great truth which *The Times* had taught all English journalists, that they must deal in news, and that they must accommodate themselves to a special public by acquiring a "tone." In the long run it succeeded so perfectly that even gentlemen's servants found in it the one and only medium for advertising their wants.

The *Globe*, too, was founded in 1803, and the *Standard*, a sort of rarefied *Times*, in 1827. The latter came forward as a champion of Church and State at a time when, Catholic Emancipation and electoral reform being in the air, the established institutions were thought to be in danger. In the middle of the century it was well supplied with news. It was Tory and clerical, respectable and dignified, sonorous and occasionally epigrammatic—essentially Victorian.

A century ago a newspaper tradition was founded. *The Times* led the way, and held a supreme, almost unchallenged, position till near the end of the Victorian era. The daily Press emerged as an intermediary between those who were really the rulers of the country, and those who, according to the Constitution, were supposed to be. It asserted the existence of a public opinion which did exist and

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might at any time, deprived of a regular outlet, become obstreperous. It served to divert discontent and anger into the comparatively harmless passion of party politics. It still failed to touch the masses of the people, who were illiterate and unorganized. Indeed, in those early days of the nineteenth century, it actually provided a bulwark between the governing class and the proletariat. For it helped to extend the area of the former. It appeased, soothed, hypnotized the middle classes. The news it provided educated them about that side of the world which they liked to hear about, and accustomed them to political bone-gnawing. We must examine more closely this rich, powerful Press which decorated Great Britain in the Victorian era.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DIGNITY OF A PENNY.

THE penny which is paid for a newspaper has acquired a kudos not belonging to that coin in any other branch of commerce. There are many circles in which the “half-penny Press” is still alluded to as something wholly vulgar and contemptible, whilst the “penny Press” is still supposed to stand for the respectable, decent, orderly, responsible, and dignified, if dull. In any other line of trade a penny is almost as insignificant as a half-penny. A porter would return it if you offered it as a tip, and a cab-man would spit on it. But in journalism it holds a unique position. It is glorified, for it is a symbol—a symbol of what our fathers learnt to look for and expect in their daily paper, of a whole civilization which is departing, of an order of things venerated. That penny carries with it a tradition from what even journalists regard as the good old days of journalism. What a savour of frock-coats and public spirit still lingers with it! What oracular sapience, and rotundity of style! And what conscientious proprietors, with long purses! There is a

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world of difference between the penny paid fifty years ago, and the half-penny, or even the penny, of to-day! There has been nothing quite like the Victorian penny paper in any other period of English history or in any other country. The immense broadening of the circle of newspaper readers was not accompanied by sensational extravagances or fantastic innovations. The public was treated with seriousness. News was presented soberly and at length. Opinions were put forth with an air of authority for the consideration of adult minds. The immediate success of the penny paper makes it evident that the large public to which it appealed was already in existence—a large class of people of a marked collective character, with certain definite tendencies of thought and sentiment. The vainest of journalists could not have said that it was the Press which imposed its character on the generation ; it was a generation which required the Victorian Press. The newspapers confirmed the middle-classes in their tastes and sentiments ; but those tastes and sentiments were there before the journalists discovered and solidified them.

It is easy enough to account for the rise of the middle classes ; but very difficult to account for their distinctive character in the Victorian period. They had always been important in England since the twelfth century, and trade was not so much despised even in the Middle Ages as is generally supposed. We gather from the Paston letters that

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aristocratic families were not always averse from intermarriage with wealthy bourgeois. It was probably the Cavalier aristocracy under the Stuarts which learnt to sneer at a bourgeoisie infected with Puritanism; but it is doubtful if they sneered at their money. During the eighteenth century trade was expanding in every direction. India and the colonies were opened up for the exploitation of commerce, and mechanical inventions fostered industry at home. But it was the industrial revolution which fundamentally altered the social balance and changed the appearance and character of the country. The application of steam to industry had an almost instantaneous effect in changing the conditions of wealth, labour, and the distribution of population. Given the steam-power and the markets of the world to play with, the mill-owners of Yorkshire and Lancashire wanted nothing but human labour to turn them into industrial potentates. The old village industries languished under the unequal competition, and the poor were more and more forced into the towns to work under the disreputable conditions which produced the Factory Acts. Whilst a few employers quickly became very rich, others became moderately rich, and all over the country small industries, encouraged by the cheapness of manufactured articles and the diffusion of money, laid the foundation of a wealth which was to mock the poverty of the masses. The new aristocracy of wealth began to push itself into the place of the

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aristocracy of birth, breaking down the exact limits of exclusiveness, and a rabble of the aspiring well-to-do pressed on their heels. What the rich could do the less rich hoped to do. There were infinite gradations of wealth among those who were drawn into the battle of commerce. There were the great controllers of industry, the controllers of small industries, and an army of middlemen. In offices there were men ranging between the status of managers and the lack of status of junior clerks. And there were those who ministered in a variety of indirect ways to the needs of the spending community—lawyers, architects, accountants, doctors, scientists, even musicians, actors, artists and men of letters. From the midst of this pushing, scrambling, wealth-making and wealth-desiring community emerges—clearly defined to the imagination, a definite memory to our grandfathers—that middle-class of sober opinion, strict ideas and ideals, with a conscience which it willingly held up for the admiration of the world. The illiterate poor still seethed in their underground dens. But for them early-Victorian England did not exist. She was scarcely aware of them except as an intrusive eye-sore or an occasion for inevitable legislation. A little later, Middle-Victorian England, better educated in sentiment, introduced them into her conscience, and bemoaned their fate in books and pulpits.

It is easy, as I have said, to explain the rise of the middle classes, but not easy to understand how

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just *this* middle-class, this paradox of surpassing callousness and surpassing uprightness, of complete lack of scruple in the industrial world and tyrannical scruple in the domestic and social world, should have given its mark to the period in which our great newspapers flourished and developed their dignified tradition. If we are to understand it at all we must remember that the competitive spirit, common to trading humanity at all times, assumed a monstrously exaggerated form when mankind was tempted with the inhuman magic of the machine ; and that this spirit of legalized warfare, sometimes called progress, sometimes the survival of the fittest, was introduced with amazing suddenness into the life of a class which till then had been of little account in the State, which had been accustomed to the slower jog-trot of bourgeois life and to bourgeois customs. Something of the impress of the old Puritanism still remained upon this class. But it was the Evangelical teaching of Wesley and Whitefield which gave it the admonitory tone and the sanctimoniousness which exist even to this day. In the Journals of John Wesley we can find a more comprehensive picture of the middle classes in the eighteenth century than is given by any other memoirist or by any novelist. Wesleyanism encouraged a moral habit which made men responsible not only for the good conduct of themselves but also of their fellows. We find men abstaining from the pernicious luxury of tea-drinking

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in order to set a good example to their weaker brethren. And the spirit of the Wesleyan revival not only affected those who call themselves Wesleyans, but also the Anglican Church in which Wesley had taken Holy Orders. It communicated itself through every religious sect, and took root especially among the middle classes. What a difference in the tone of English society at the beginning of the eighteenth century and English society at the end—the England of Henry Fielding and Smollett, and the England of Miss Burney and Maria Edgeworth! In that brief period the middle classes, already sanctified by revivalism, came forth dignified by wealth. The solid bourgeois, hitherto submerged beneath the surface of the national consciousness, now sprang into self-conscious existence. The magic lamp of Aladdin was rubbed ; the genie breathed upon the furnaces ; the poor ground out their vitals at the magical, irresistible, pitiless, because unheeding, command ; and Mr. Aladdin, the bourgeois touched by revivalism, was endowed with rubies and princesses without for a moment forgetting his manners or his conscience. It was enough that he possessed his lamp. We never heard that Aladdin concerned himself about the welfare of his hard-working genie, or considered by what means space was annihilated for him. If Aladdin forgot, why not an honest bourgeois of the early nineteenth century who was to carve his name and his bourgeois ideals upon an

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epoch, seeking also, as he did, the inheritance of the ancient aristocracy?

And so that curious turn of fortune which gave to England command of the world's markets at the exact moment when coal and steam were beginning to destroy the equilibrium of the world, also exposed the country to the decorous ravages of the bourgeois class. When other countries were passing through the throes of revolution, Englishmen diverted their energies to making war upon the French and the poor, to money-making and conscience-promoting. Women, too, played the important part which they always play. They were the readers who had welcomed Miss Burney's *Evelina*, because it was a book fit to give to their daughters. They too, a little later, instructed youth in the proprieties of *Sandford and Merton* and the novels of Maria Edgeworth. The bourgeois of the next generation, addicted to money-making or the endeavour to make it, had been brought up in this prim school. They were as versed in the moral proprieties as they were callous to the sufferings of any class not their own. They read and talked politics, completely satisfied with the current political controversies which simulated passion and perpetuated the eternal compromise. When those few men of intellectual stamina who had absorbed and breathed the spirit of the French Revolution — Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Hazlitt, De Quincey—had ceased to be ignored,

they had already been converted into the objects of flabby sentiment. Men began to talk of "liberty" with the same sort of earnestness that they taught their sons to recite "The boy stood on the burning deck." They were to receive Garibaldi with the furious enthusiasm of men who had stimulated freedom by granting what it was not convenient to refuse.

There were of course many men who knew upon what a shallow foundation the self-complacency of the British nation rested. Men like Cobbett at the beginning of the century and George Jacob Holyoake in the middle of it knew what sort of lives the majority of the people, voiceless, were condemned to live. The romantic poets who sang the praises of freedom knew little of the actualities of slavery, but it was no sham ideal which inspired them. Carlyle in his harsh mockery anticipated Nietzsche in scoffing at the social hypocrisy of his time, but he pleased the multitude because he magnified the qualities they thought they admired, and made idols of men and phrases which they too could idolize. The clear-sighted Matthew Arnold poured ridicule on the Mr. Roebuck who too blatantly sang the praises of our "glorious British Constitution," and on the Sir Charles Adderley who expatiated on "the best breed in the whole world." But Mr. Roebuck and Sir Charles Adderley, not Matthew Arnold, spoke for the middle classes of England. The din and clamour of the Oxford

Movement, which, to men of culture, seemed to shake the heavens, was scarcely so much as a still small voice to the majority of common-sense Englishmen. Nevertheless the talk, the agitation, the real and the simulated enthusiasm for liberty, equality, freedom of thought, public honour, national well-being, the greatest good of the greatest number, were having their effect even upon the most stolid and sect-ridden of Englishmen. For this mass of middle-class Englishmen there could not be, at this stage, many clearly defined principles of public life. But, as the century went on, there became more and more apparent a sort of general good-will, a disposition to be benevolent when benevolence did not interfere either with business or the domestic code—a *sentiment* of benevolence which could easily be shocked by stories of suffering. Men did not look around them to see how the poor lived, but they were moved by “The Song of a Shirt.” Whilst they were ignoring the discontents of Ireland, taking the side of slavery in America, annexing Egypt by a financial dodge, and handing over Macedonia to the proved barbarity of the Turk, they still talked of the small nationalities and the mission of Great Britain to protect them.

But this is looking forward. We see what sort of a class it was which at the beginning of the Victorian epoch was inadequately catered for by the newspaper Press. The Reform Act of 1832

enfranchised a great number of men who could not possibly be in close touch with public affairs because they were not properly informed. The newspapers were still too expensive, and the metropolitan papers were slow in reaching the provinces. Lectures, platform speeches, and pamphlets could do much to organize opinion in time of acute crisis, but could not provide the continuous stream of information which was needed. In 1832 there were still three serious handicaps in the production of newspapers. First there was the duty on paper, one of the "taxes on knowledge" which was not abolished till 1861, after a long struggle. Secondly, and thirdly, there were the two taxes which originated in the Stamp Act of 1712, the first being a tax on each newspaper, which had been reduced to a penny in 1815, but was not abolished till 1853, the second a tax on advertisements. How heavy the latter was may be judged from the fact that in 1832 the duty on newspaper advertisements brought in more than £170,000, of which *The Times* paid about £70,000. The following year (1833) the tax on advertisements was reduced from 3s. 6d. to 1s. 6d. But it is significant of the growth of newspaper power in the thirties that the revenue which in 1832 was £170,650 stood as high as £131,608 in 1841, though the tax had been reduced by more than a half. In 1853 it had reached the total of £180,000, from which we see that in the twenty-one years between the

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Reform Act of 1832 and the year 1853 the advertisement value of British newspapers had more than doubled. The gradual removal and final abolition of the taxes on knowledge can be clearly seen in the following table.

1815.—Tax on each newspaper reduced to 1d.

1833.—Tax on advertisements reduced from 3/6 to 1/6.

1853.—Tax on newspapers and tax on advertisements abolished.

1861.—Paper duty abolished.

And it is worth while to look forward by adding two more dates.

1867.—Second Reform Act.

1870.—Compulsory Education Act.

Whilst the chief artificial restrictions were thus removed in 1853, other natural obstacles were overcome by two inventions which joined up countries and continents. The electric telegraph connected the towns of England and the capitals of Europe, so that the latest news could be transmitted instantaneously to the papers; and railway trains brought the greater part of England within the delivery radius of London, so that metropolitan papers could be quickly distributed over a large area. In the 'forties the main problem of making and distributing a newspaper had been solved. In 1853 the artificial handicap on sales was removed by the complete abolition of the Stamp Act.

The penny paper was the immediate con-

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sequence. In London the *Daily Telegraph* led the way in 1855, and began at once to build up a valuable property. Most of the other papers quickly followed, even the Conservative *Standard* following suit as early as 1858. The *Morning Post* held out till 1881. *The Times* remained in regal isolation at 3d., and only in the year 1913 came down to 2d. The London papers, distributed by train, encroached on the sphere of provincial papers within a radius of 200 miles. The *Clerkenwell News*, which had been doing well in London, found it worth its while to become the *Daily Chronicle* in 1877, and with the national status it then acquired became a powerful rival to the *Daily News*, a paper which had survived its foundation by Dickens in 1846, distinguished itself in the Free Trade controversies and the revolutionary excitements of 1848, and reached its zenith during the Franco-Prussian War, when Archibald Forbes got the better of the great *Times* war-correspondent, W. H. Russell.

But in spite of the encroachments of the London papers, the greater provincial papers held their own by dint of the advertisement value peculiar to each district. In Scotland, in Ireland, and in the North of England they were still comparatively immune from effective competition. They did not, and have not yet, become very great properties in Ireland, because, with the exception of North-Eastern Ulster, there has never been a sufficient boom in

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industry to create a great advertisement value. But in the North of England and in Scotland large populations, quickly multiplying in rich industrial regions, afforded the ideal conditions for the penny paper. The *Scotsman* and the *Manchester Guardian* were both reduced to a penny within two years of the abolition of the tax. The *Glasgow Herald*, now probably the most powerful paper in Scotland, followed in 1859. The *Liverpool Daily Post* anticipated even the London *Telegraph* in reducing its price. The *Newcastle Chronicle*, the *Birmingham Daily Post*, the *Liverpool Courier*, the *Yorkshire Post* and other journals which then as now exercised far more power than Londoners realize, all joined the ranks of the penny paper.

The penny paper became the established type, and it was itself evolved from the type which had become traditional in *The Times*. The latter, as we have seen, catered from the first for the well-to-do middle classes, and became indispensable to political and official persons. Under its ægis, and that of the papers which in the first half of the century emulated its authority with varying degrees of success, a school of journalists grew up; an example had been set; a tradition had been fostered. The newspapers fell into line with the other great characteristic industries of the country. The industrial stampede which marked the beginning of the century, and the gambling spirit which accompanied it, slackened off in those great businesses

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which had become firmly established ; the wilder methods were practised only by beginners who had everything to gain and nothing to lose. I could name dozens of great manufacturing or commercial firms which fifty years ago had attained a hold over markets and a position of unassailable security, firms which made a principle of extending their business only by adhering to the methods they had already found successful, refusing to embark on new projects even when such projects promised large profits. In particular I have in mind an important shipping business which was a source of great wealth to a single family in the 'fifties and 'sixties, as it is to this day. In practice two or three members of the family, at most, conducted and controlled the business. Innumerable opportunities of extending their activities into new spheres were presented to the firm ; but they refused them, not because they had no confidence in the proposed expansion, but because, rich and content with the steadily increasing profits they already made, they were personally disinclined for new responsibilities. Throughout the Victorian era the same spirit has been manifest in most of the great industries controlled by individuals. Unlike the great capitalists of America, most of the leaders of British industry and commerce lacked the inclination to multiply and diversify their activities ; they had no ambition to become multi-millionaires. Their conservative methods succeeded because, owing to the Napoleonic wars,

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England had a twenty years' start beyond the rest of the industrial world. And the methods which became traditions with the leading English tradesmen had this advantage, that, enabling them to give their whole attention to the perfecting of their special business, they tended to standardize British goods, and build up British credit. Their methods were adequate to a time when increasing population provided them automatically with a market, when steam-power enabled them to distribute as well as manufacture, and the markets of all the continents lay open to them—in other words, a time of unparalleled trade expansion and boom.

The middle-Victorian newspapers were conducted in the same manner as the great family industries. In most cases owing their origin to the initiative of a single individual, they became private family properties, controlled, as in the case of *The Times*, by one or two men, who took a personal interest in the paper and made it an occupation. It is a mistake to idealize these, in many cases, worthy gentlemen, who were probably not much better or worse than the gentlemen who control newspapers to-day. There were high-minded proprietors like the Taylors of the *Manchester Guardian*, who had a real interest in politics and reform; there were men proud of their papers as institutions, like the proprietors of *The Times*; and there were men, like the founder of the *Daily Telegraph*, who were interested in their papers just as they might have

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been in any other profitable business. But it must be clearly understood that the penny newspapers of fifty, forty and thirty years ago represented *business* concerns, the difference between the papers then and the same papers to-day being just this—that the former were highly profitable, and that the latter, in many, very many cases, are highly unprofitable. Nor is the least credit to be given to the nonsense which is to-day so often heard—that the old penny papers were independent of the advertiser. On the contrary, they lived upon advertisement revenue. The circulations of the 'sixties will not bear comparison with the circulations of to-day. But trade was expanding, and expanding trade means advertisements, and the newspapers reaped a golden harvest. Nor were there so many competing media for advertisement as there are to-day. The columns of the newspaper were the regular channels of proclamation and persuasion.

No. The difference between the penny journalism of fifty years ago and that of to-day is not represented by the fact that the latter is dependent on the advertiser, while the former was not. The difference is that the former had plenty of advertisements, whilst the latter has not enough; that the one could wait for the advertisements to come in, whilst the other has to go out and find them. The "independence" of those old penny dailies lay only in the fact that they prospered. The proud proprietor had no need to sell his soul to receive that

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bare margin of profit. A man is inclined to be conservative in his methods so long as an existing method is paying him handsomely. He is not disposed to "sack" his editor and his staff every half-year when his editor and staff are those with whom he has been triumphing. He will not experiment to find new readers when he knows that he has readers without experiments. If a staid, decorous, dull manner has served his turn, he will be loath to go into the highways and hedges of brightness, quickness, sensationalism, in order to bring in the readers who lie outside the fold. The young girl was not allowed to read the paper in the average Victorian household ; therefore she was not catered for. The average young man was bored to death by most of the contents of the paper. He was not catered for. The growing class of young clerks in business houses cannot have found much to stimulate their interest except in the law reports, and these were not presented in the pithy, sensational manner familiar to the modern reader. In the 'sixties and 'seventies the proprietors of penny papers were still selling their wares to a small portion of the community. By offering them at the reduced price of a penny they had captured the whole of that public which wanted the ponderous and well-informed journal ; and to satisfy these staid and conservative readers there was no need to depart from the essentials of the established tradition. Therefore a proprietor whose paper was already com-

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mercially successful made it a cardinal feature in his policy to keep his paper exactly as it had been. Any change, in his view, might be a change for the worse. This idea still holds good, so far as we can judge, in the management of the *Daily Telegraph*. To-day the *Daily Telegraph* is the only penny London paper that appears to retain the undiminished support of its readers and advertisers. Since the day when it suddenly and dramatically revised its policy it has never altered its essential form and tone ; it has been unwilling to venture upon any originality not consistent with its tradition. It is also well known in Fleet Street that it keeps its staff together, retaining many men for life, and paying them well.

What the *Daily Telegraph* does to-day all the papers found it to their interest to do forty or fifty years ago. Being sound business properties, controlled in the interests of one or two individuals having preferences and prejudices of their own, they offered no encouragement to the quick-change artist. Thus it was that the men who had been trained in the service of a particular journal were valuable to that journal ; they were a part of it, and could not be constantly changed without upsetting the whole gearage of the machine.

On August 18 (1913) Mr. Robert Donald, Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, delivered a presidential address at the York meeting of the Institute of Journalists. He contrasted the privately owned

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Press of twenty years ago with the Press of to-day which is mainly owned by corporations. "The private owner," he remarked, "liked profit; but as he had no responsibility towards shareholders he preferred less profit to compromise with principle." A "Journalist" of forty years' experience contested Mr. Donald's point in a letter published in *The Times*. He speaks of the "degrading remuneration and the dark and often insanitary working surroundings that prevailed, with some exceptions, in newspaper offices two or three decades back." Newspaper offices, it is true, have been notoriously dirty and untidy places. The smart, spick-and-span office of to-day is a recent innovation, and many an old-fashioned journalist speaks with apparent pride of those tumble-down, decaying buildings which encouraged his *quondam* Bohemianism. But this correspondent hardly substantiates his statement that the journalist of thirty years ago was relatively ill-paid. He began his journalistic career, he says, on an important evening newspaper. He was very hard worked and was paid only five guineas a week. He does not seem to be aware that the complete novice of to-day, at the beginning of his journalistic apprenticeship, would consider himself fortunate if he started with that salary. On the whole the journalist of thirty years ago was paid at least as well as he is to-day, and his position was far more secure.

The members of a staff generally developed that sort of *esprit de corps* which can only flourish when

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the same men work together for many years, and when they are on the whole well treated by their employers. There were jealousies, prejudices, favouritisms, as there are to-day. There were many of the abuses of paternal government. There was also an easy-going toleration of certain offences upon which the tradition put no taboo. There was perhaps more "log-rolling" than there is to-day; Press-tickets were too freely used for admission to theatres, corners were found in those copious sheets for items of information designed to interest some friend of a member of the staff rather than the general public. Many old journalists look back with regret upon the free-and-easy system which tolerated small abuses. But they were not tolerated at the expense of devotion to the essential spirit of the institution. The individual journalist had to toil for long hours at his anonymous columns. He had to submit to the monotonous regime of his reporting, his sub-editing, his special writing, or whatever his task might be. He must sacrifice whatever individual talents he might possess to the well-being of the institution; it was the institution which took the credit.

It had not only dignity. It had, in a measure, weight and credibility; more, at any rate, than was to be found in the journalism of any other country. Those long Parliamentary reports testify to the seriousness with which it treated politics, and in presenting these so generously the penny paper was

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continuing the very earliest traditions of English journalism. When the Long Parliament sanctioned the publication of its debates it was sanctioning the real beginning of English journalism. And never was this function of Parliamentary reporting performed more earnestly than by the Victorian penny papers. Each great London daily had its special staff of gallery reporters who reproduced verbatim the more important speeches. Members of Parliament addressed themselves as much to the journalists as to a House seldom so attentive to their words. The penny paper existed to give information to the respectable middle classes ; and the respectable middle classes, among whom the belief was fostered that through the mysterious processes of the poll they controlled the destinies of Parliament demanded in particular information from Westminster. But other news also was presented with the same conscientious sobriety. A clear line was drawn between news and comment upon news. Some papers, of course, gave more attention to the subjects which interested their special clientèle than would be given by papers whose readers had other tastes. The *Daily News*, for example, gave special space to news about factory reform, co-operative movements, the Bulgarian atrocities, and revolutionary propaganda abroad. The *Daily Telegraph*, excellent in its all-round news service, gave particular attention to social gossip and acrostics. The *Standard* and the *Morning Post*

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were precise in their university intelligence, and in news about ecclesiastical matters, hunting, etc. But all of them treated seriously their function of giving information—that is to say, not mere sensation, but reports of those public events which might be expected to interest enfranchised citizens—speeches by public men, proceedings in the law-courts, scientific discoveries, etc. They had their regular correspondents in the more important capitals abroad, men whose endeavour it was to send weighty reports about the politics and diplomacy of foreign countries. In time of war they sent brilliant men as war-correspondents who vied with one another in dispatching early news and graphic accounts of battles—the picturesque special article of the modern newspaper was perhaps invented by the war-correspondent. They varied in the extent to which they gave news about literature, art, music and drama, but these came more and more to be regarded as important features in newspapers. To the *Daily Chronicle* in the 'nineties belongs the credit of giving a reasoned and extended account of current literature as a necessary part of the day's news—a last ambitious leap of a penny Victorian paper before it plunged into the modern maelstrom of a half-penny.

They took very seriously their business of giving news. But how much more seriously still did they treat their function of commenting upon news, of being the makers of opinion! Every day that broad

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leader page had its unconscionably long columns of leading articles, in which anonymous writers poured forth the collective authority of the institution beneath a thunderous "we." Readers all over England looked for inspiration from those clumsy pompous sentences, where the stylistic influence of Burke, the snap of Macaulay, or the stertorous manner of Carlyle, prevailed according to the fashion of the time. In those days men really read leading articles, even more carefully than they read those long Parliamentary debates. And not only did they read them. They believed them. When once the average middle-class citizen had accustomed himself to a particular paper—as he always did—he fell under the fatal fascination of that leading article. Without knowing it he began to assimilate those opinions which were expressed and iterated on every suitable occasion. The newspaper did his political thinking for him. It became his brain. So well adjusted to the average mind were those average leading articles that the daily Press really did represent opinion—the opinion of the respectable, so-called "educated" classes. And thus a strange, monstrous superstition grew more deeply into the vitals of the nation—a superstition on the part of the Press and those who followed it that public life consisted of certain clearly-defined interests, chief of which was the interest in the duel of party politics as it was fought, and on the other hand a superstition on the part of public men that the Press which

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praised or denounced them with its conventional thunder represented the voice of the nation. In a sense it did. But it was a vicious circle. The middle classes made the Press, and the Press made the middle classes; both of them together made politicians, and politicians made them. Between the lot of them this country saw the emergence of the prettiest set of superstitions which have ever mocked a country dominated by a speciously benevolent plutocracy.

I say "dominated," but perhaps that word requires some qualification. If the plutocracy were still masters of the situation, they still governed in fear and trembling. They began to fawn upon that meticulous public which represented the famous "public opinion" supposed to manifest itself in the Press and to declare its irresistible will at elections. But behind that fear lay also a deeper fear of the inarticulate masses, on whose behalf benevolence had already been roused, for whom also Liberals, with their doctrinaire sympathy, had incurred the dislike and often merited contempt of Conservatives. The Press did throw light upon questions which the few who actually ruled would have liked to keep dark. In moments of crisis it was capable of arousing a storm of feeling, as at the time of the Crimean War, strong enough to imperil Governments. In ordinary times it had no such convulsive power. But its influence was there none the less, for rulers lived in fear of it as a potential force or actually accustomed

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themselves to respect it. The Victorian penny Press, with all its earnestness for unadorned facts, with all its show of pure reason, was essentially representative of well-to-do sentimentalism. But that sentimentalism was no unimportant part in the national life. It had its uses. It helped forlorn causes to the victories of glorious and foreseen failure. It put animation into the old mask of eighteenth century hypocrisy, and behind the show much genuine enthusiasm burned, much disinterested zeal.

The penny Press was engaged in giving publicity to public life and to all that was taken to be of interest to the upper and middle classes. Through its agency hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of men were every morning induced to attend to the same facts and to think about the same things. It kept up with remarkable thoroughness a continuous chain of news from all the world, and acted upon the presumption that readers knew what had already been reported and could maintain an interest in the same series of events. Thus public opinion came to be something much more real than the excitement of general elections. A multitude of men informed about the same things and thinking about the same things possesses a moral power far greater than the influence, feverishly exercised, of the Parliamentary franchise. We may observe that for many years after the extension of the franchise in 1867 the middle classes remained the

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dominant factor even at the poll, and still more so in other spheres of influence ; the reason being that at that time the middle classes were better educated and better informed about affairs than the working classes which out-numbered them. The whole credit must not be given to the newspapers. It would be difficult to over-estimate the influence of some of Dickens's novels in turning the attention of middle-class readers to the iniquities of the work-house or the Courts of law ; and the light which he threw on those subjects, the moral indignation he aroused among middle-class readers, were in themselves sufficient to compel reform. (The franchise had no direct influence whatsoever upon such reforms ; public opinion, when focussed on a point, is far more powerful than Parliamentary votes or Parliament itself.) Nor must we forget the influence of the pulpit, the political platform, and the lecture-hall, all of them means of organizing opinion and bringing men together. But when everything has been mentioned, it is still, in the middle and later Victorian epochs, the periodical Press, and especially the penny newspaper, which kept the middle classes of the country informed, which organized them into a community at least partially articulate. If any foreigner wanted to know what was the feeling in Great Britain about this or that question, he would really mean, what is the feeling of those people who digest with their breakfasts the reports and opinions of the penny newspaper ?

## CHAPTER IX.

### CHANGE IN AMERICA.

SOME bold student with a genius for amassing facts will one day embark upon an exhaustive history of the American Press. He will find himself confronted with a task not less complex than gigantic. It will be gigantic, for every city has one or more newspapers, whilst books, magazines, and weekly reviews are published not from one great centre only, but from many. And we may judge of the complexity of his task when we remember how quickly the American nation has passed through bewildering transformations, with corresponding changes in the character of the Press, and also what a variety of communities, differing in habits, tastes and ideals, have been held together simultaneously within the Union. There is here no simple problem of a nation passing by slow stages of evolution from one phase to another. It is that of a community divided, not horizontally, as in England, by distinctions of class, through which opinion must float upwards; but vertically, by the numerous divisions between localities and States; and again, by divisions between groups of States,

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between those of the North, and those of the South, between the settled communities East of the Alleghanies, and the expanding communities in the Western plains; till finally there grew up yet another America, among the uplands of the Western mountains and on the luxuriant Pacific seaboard.

The distinctions of type were not merely between those who were content to remain in the settled regions of the East and those restless, energetic pioneers who pushed Westward. Alien blood was drawn into the Union when French Louisiana, Spanish Florida and the mixed populations of Missouri and Texas were added to the States. Immigrants poured in to increase the confusion of races—Germans, Irishmen, Italians, Slavs and Jews who were constantly recruited into the army of labour. This mixed and floating population had, perhaps, no instantaneous effect upon the literature which is addressed to the few, but at every moment it was important to the periodical Press. The newspaper exists to give information about those events which interest its readers, or to express opinions which they will welcome. It will not attempt adequate discussion of politics unless politics interest a majority of its clients; it cannot report speeches or collect ample news except on those subjects to which men are anxious to attend. The professional journalist must be content to select and limit his audience if he is to satisfy the

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influential few ; he will be tempted to diversify and sensationalize his paper if he would appeal to the variegated many.

In the first years after the Union there was no question of a national newspaper Press such as was growing up in England. It would be impossible to over-estimate the supreme importance of the fact that the American nation grew out of a congeries of distinct and distinctive States. A few years before the War of Independence the jealousies were often more remarkable than the sympathies. The collective spirit was aroused and fostered by the common action of war, and the supreme personal influence of Washington guided that collective spirit into union. Whilst the struggle of actual warfare still overshadowed all other issues, and, to a lesser extent, whilst the Constitution was still in debate, men's minds were turned to affairs of the nation ; the attention of the newspapers was riveted upon national rather than local issues. But when the crisis was over, America could not immediately forget that she had consisted of separate States. All the older institutions were State institutions. Public opinion was still for the most part the opinion of States. The newspapers never circulated through a larger region than the State, and were often written for the inhabitants of a single town ; much of their attention was naturally given to local affairs, the conditions of their existence giving no encourage-

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ment to wider interests. Railway trains, steamships and telegraphs had not yet linked the confederation into an organic whole, and even to-day means of rapid communication have not quite annihilated the immense distances. The historic and geographical priority of the State has been a factor of profound importance in the whole public life of America, and not least in that of the periodical Press.

*The Times*, under the name of the *Daily Universal Register*, had been founded in England two years after the recognition of American independence. Within twenty years it had become not merely a successful newspaper, but a national organ. In America during the same period there was no possibility of the creation of such a paper. The necessary conditions did not exist. England was a small, compact country, with a population which by comparison was dense. She had one, and only one, metropolitan city, the public life of which overshadowed that of all other cities. Politics, society and literature found in London a focal point. In London national affairs were transacted ; it was to London that distinguished foreigners found their way ; the city was the centre of politics, fashion, wealth, literature and art. In every sense and for every purpose London was the head-quarters of English national life. A newspaper published there could be always in touch with national and international affairs, and it

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had within its delivery radius a large proportion of the educated classes of the country. At the beginning of the nineteenth century *The Times* was not merely a London organ, expressing London interests. It was already a national and international newspaper, presenting the news of Europe, discussing the politics of Europe.

But in America geography and history were alike hostile to the foundation of such a journal. Even if there had been no more than one capital city a newspaper published there could not have been carried over such vast distances in time to satisfy one hundredth of the inhabitants; and even railway transit, which has solved the problem for the magazine, is not quick enough for a universal newspaper. But in fact there were many capitals. Boston indeed could claim with some show of reason the premiership in intellect. The universities and the free-schools of Massachusetts gave a cultural priority to Boston from the first. But Philadelphia, New York, Washington, Baltimore, and half a dozen other cities had equal or surpassing claims to political or commercial supremacy. The life within each of these cities was of main interest to the citizens. A newspaper published in any one of them was necessarily a city or State newspaper first, and a national newspaper only in the second place. Certain journals persisted modestly through the whole period of transition, and even emerged at the end as reputable and sufficiently profitable

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modern papers. The *Maryland Gazette*, founded in 1727, dropped in 1736, and re-started in 1745, exists to this day. So does the *New Hampshire Gazette*, which was founded in 1756, and through all the vicissitudes of revolution pursued the even tenor of its way. The newspapers of a hundred years ago were small modest journals, each of them generally owned by one man who was himself editor and principal writer, and considered himself exceptionally fortunate if he sold two thousand copies. As late as 1831 William Lloyd Garrison started his famous *Boston Liberator*, which for thirty years he himself wrote, printed and published.

Geography alone and the division of America into States were sufficient, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to prevent the foundation of a supreme national organ like the English *Times*. And even after the middle of the century there were reasons why the American newspapers should follow a different course from that of *The Times* and the greater penny papers of England. The latter grew out of political and social conditions unknown in America. The English constitutional revolution of 1689 had not extended its theoretical advantages to the colonists. The fraud of "representative" government, which had left supreme power in the hands of an aristocratic oligarchy whilst it gave a shadowy appearance of power to the middle classes, sufficed to persuade the majority of Englishmen that England was a country governed by con-

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sent. The established theory of the Constitution gave a dignity to party politics, which the middle classes, emerging from their obscurity in the eighteenth century to their wealth and influence in the nineteenth, were interested in preserving. The English middle classes were a useful buffer between the aristocracy and the proletariat. They clung to class distinctions with the eagerness of parvenus. They expressed a benevolence which mitigated the lot of the inarticulate poor while it diverted them from revolution. They clung to the dignity and prestige of ancient institutions to which they had attached themselves as parasites. The great penny papers of the Victorian era reflected, as we have seen, that staid, sober, middle-class opinion which was willing to believe in party politics as the whole requisite of public life, which had confidence in the slow, progressive theory of the Constitution, which was impressed by the dignity, the anonymous pomp, the impersonality, of its newspaper ; and the newspaper owners themselves were men likewise hypnotized, not only by the advertisement revenue which enriched them, but by the social and political system which gave them honours. The class system in society, the party system in politics, and respect for the social conventions which sanctified both, left upon Victorian England distinctive marks which were reflected in the contemporary Press. The latter was therefore decorous, highly political in its interests, and if a little unscrupulous in the interests

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of party, it was, for the most part, financially incorruptible. It was obliged to give full and continuous news on the recognized topics of interest. It lived upon its prestige. And its prestige stood very high throughout Europe.

The American Press in the nineteenth century was not wholly free from traditions, but it was entirely free from those traditions which made Englishmen speak of the Press as the "Fourth Estate." It knew nothing of the sham-fight of party politics. It knew nothing of rigid class distinctions. A man in those days, as now, might be rich or poor, well-behaved or ill-behaved. But then, as now, Americans were disposed to respect rather than to decry a man who had risen by his own efforts from a lowly position to a position of wealth or honour. There was no superstition about the divine right of blue blood cherished by parvenus who aspired to an inheritance won by purchase. There was in America no born aristocracy for men to emulate; or rather, such aristocracy of birth as existed could only trace its origin to the defeated and hated despotism of England. The War of Independence had disposed of feudal pretensions, and the rough life of the Western pioneer encouraged respect for achievement rather than pretensions. A man stood for what he was worth in energy, power, or wealth, and no more. In such a community democracy had become a social fact, even if it was not to be realized politically.

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Equality and fraternity had a real basis in fact in America before they became vain shibboleths in France. The United States started with this great advantage over all the countries of Europe, that she never inherited a decayed feudal system.

But, as Mr. James Bryce has pointed out, and as Mr. Bliss Perry re-emphasizes, the spirit of "fellowship" which is an extraordinarily real thing in America tends also to promote an atmosphere of "commonness." Where men of different calibre hob-nob together in a spirit of friendliness and good-fellowship the best of them fall back upon those common ideas and expressions which can be appreciated by the least of them. The rarer and more subtle ideas are not fostered. Not only do the pomposity and the vanity of social pretensions disappear, but also some of the fineness and the distinction of intellectual superiority. When the American daily Press devoted itself wholly to the great majorities of the nation this "commonness" was to assume its most blatant form.

But in its earlier days the language of journalism was often refreshing in its honesty, its directness, and its human vitality. The old owner-editor had not yet subdued himself to the sheer mechanism of newspaper production. Not till the 'forties and 'fifties was vast capital sunk in printing machinery, or a vast turnover required for expenditure on news and distribution. The public for which each paper

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catered was still small, and correspondingly select. The news was scanty, and consisted largely of the official news which came to the editor almost automatically. The newspaper was still as much a vehicle of opinion as of news. An owner who is also principal writer is disposed to value opinions at something more than their market value, and the market value of well-informed opinion was real for the limited newspaper public of the 'thirties. The writing was not always "literary," but it was generally vigorous. There was little attempt, as in England, to set up the collective prestige of the newspaper as a cover to the individual writer. There was little of that pompous dignity in which the British leader-writer involved his not always lucid, and seldom humorous sentences. The American writer loved to be scathing in his personalities, and his attacks were often insulting. But when he wrote in this way he was writing what he meant ; he was guilty of no insincerity ; he was refusing to turn public life into a superstition. In a democracy which maintained that any decent, vigorous citizen might prove fit to be President, the words of a President were not to be treated like the oracles of a god. There was no disposition to speak of a political, or literary, or personal opponent with a respect which was not honestly felt for him. Hence there was little check upon personal abuse. Scurrility is often amusing, and is not more harmful than hypocrisy ; and many a violent tirade was

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couched in choice language which may remind us of the eighteenth century English ancestry of those nineteenth century American journalists. In the middle of the century the famous Horace Greeley was no less an adept in abuse than his less brilliant contemporaries.

And so we find a paper like the *Springfield Republican* (founded in 1824) impressing itself upon the minds of blunt, well-to-do citizens by the vigour of its opinions, and a paper like the *Daily National Gazette* catering for the literary interests of cultured Philadelphians, and in 1830 the *Boston Transcript* appealing to a circle of New England intellectuals, not without a touch of that pompous solemnity which suggests English inspiration. A little later there appeared other papers which, though necessarily falling into line with the new fashions of news-getting and quick production, attempted still to appeal to a select circle capable of appreciating literary and political discussions, and fastidiousness even in abuse. The *New York Tribune* was the most remarkable of these papers. It reflected Horace Greeley's personal enthusiasm for the education of the democracy, for public spirit in local and national politics, for the co-operative movement, for Abolition, and for the dissemination of literary taste and ideas. Nor did the *Tribune* neglect the newest inventions in printing or the organization of news. It was the first journal which used the Atlantic cable for the transmission of war-correspondence. In

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Philadelphia also the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* became a paper in many respects comparable with the *Boston Transcript*, though it is now more especially remarkable for its equipment, enterprise, and business organization. At a time when the popular Press of New York, Chicago and other great cities was already becoming yellow, the *New York Evening Post*, which had been founded in 1766, came into the hands of a group of brilliant literary men, who gave to it some of that eighteenth century flavour of persiflage and satire which its modern editors, rather self-consciously, endeavour to preserve.

In the 'thirties and 'forties of the nineteenth century it was already evident that there was a great future for the Press of America. Papers were being printed in every city, and American engineers were devoting to the improvement of printing presses a care and skill through which their machines soon became models for the world. The first railway was constructed in 1830, and in 1840 more than 2000 miles were open. In 1844 the construction of the first electric telegraph revolutionized the whole conception of news, and a few years later Hoe's "Type Revolving Fast Printing Machine" enabled printers to cope with a vastly increasing multiplication of newspapers. The population of the States was growing not only by natural increase but by the arrival of hordes of immigrants from Europe. The virgin soil had

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been yielding rich crops to the agriculturist, and the surplus wealth of the country was being turned towards mining and manufactures. It was a time of trade boom all over the world, but towards the middle of the century there was no country which offered so vast a harvest as the seemingly inexhaustible States. It was a nation of men accustomed to adventure. When industry and finance were revealed as a new field of adventure, who would be more daring, who perhaps more rash, than men accustomed to changes of fortune such as a new vast country affords? Whilst the prosperous English manufacturer, representing perhaps the second or third generation in his business, was content with his regular profits and remained conservative in his methods, the American manufacturer or financier plunged into profit-making with the recklessness of a far-Western cowboy. The modern age of speculation and financial gambling was beginning.

Here was a chance for the journalist. With growing populations eager to read, so long as suitable reading matter was given it, what more natural than to exploit them in the interests of the growing class of adventurers, the speculative men of business who were anxious to buy publicity? Already in 1833 the *Sun* had set out to attract the thousands of average citizens who would pay for a cheap popular paper, and under Charles A. Dana it was destined to become a power in and

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beyond New York. But the business genius of James Gordon Bennett enabled the *New York Herald* to build up a record circulation and an unequalled advertisement revenue. He used the method of *boom*.

We need not regard Charles Dickens's account of America and the American Press as an exact and realistic picture. But it is well to keep his impressions before us as a corrective to the sentimental view of America before the War, a view according to which the country was inhabited by men entirely unlike the Americans of to-day, men who were grimly Puritanical and wholly steadfast of purpose, who pursued their sober ends with Spartan simplicity and unwavering earnestness. The probability is that Americans then were very much like Americans to-day, except that the Puritans were a little more prim, the rakes were a little more rakish, and the rough pioneers were a little rougher. Fewer Americans travelled to Europe. "Culture" was restricted to a smaller circle, and flourished rather in the East than in the West. The circle described in Henry James's impressions of his childhood was exceptional. We know at any rate that James Gordon Bennett used the same methods for pushing the *Herald* as are used to-day when men wish to exploit Canadian land or a new carpet tin-tack; and those methods served his purpose. He lavished expenditure on the paper. The writing was noisy and sensational.

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No curious and fantastic device was neglected for advertising the journal, and on the other hand agents were sent out to track down the commercial adventurer who could be induced to part with his money in return for publicity. The *Herald* was the first great New York paper which was run, not with a view to expressing the ideas of one or two men, nor with the primary view of supporting a political party, but as a frankly commercial concern, catering for those who required early news and sensation, making profits from the publicity it could give to the advertiser. Such credit as is due to the founder is in respect of his shrewd judgment of the New York public, his skill as an organiser and advertiser, his business capacity. The office of the *Herald* was really the first newspaper factory in a strictly industrial sense of the term. Its business was, first, the manufacture of quaint or sensational items of news which it sold to the public not only for the money it paid, but also for its attention ; and, secondly, the sale of this publicity—this attention given by the reader—to the advertiser who used its columns. Though the American newspapers had been used for trade advertisements in 1788, and the practice had been steadily growing, it was the *Herald* which made advertisement revenue the basis of newspaper production. In due course the other papers were to follow suit.

The War of the Rebellion opened up a vaster

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market for the newspapers. Just as the excitement of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe had made Englishmen clamour for prompt news of battles and foreign politics, and enabled *The Times* to gain a quick success, so the Civil War in America created an eager demand for news. No longer were men content with local or routine news or the dogmatic opinions of editors. They demanded to hear at once what was happening along that extended front where the men of the North and the South were engaged in some of the bloodiest battles of the world. And it was not only men of leisure—politicians, intellectuals and busy-bodies—who demanded information. The whole nation—rich men and poor men, cultured people and ignorant people—wanted to know how their fathers or brothers or sons were faring on the battle-field, how the nation itself, which now loomed upon them as a political entity as it had never done before, was emerging from this period of stress. The papers which were to give them news would no longer be tolerated if they were too opinionative, too fastidious. What was wanted was news from the front, and pen-pictures reflecting both the violence of the war and the violent feeling which the war evoked. It became the function and *raison d'être* of a newspaper to give expression to the war-mood of the nation.

The War of the Rebellion gave a vast impetus to newspaper enterprise. At first it had the effect

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of sending up the price of papers. For several reasons. The price of living went up enormously during the war, in other words, the purchase value of the cent went down. Papers were in demand whatever their price, and the rise in price from two cents to three cents and from three cents to four cents did not seem to check the increasing circulations. And, in the third place, the newspaper cost more to produce. Every important daily sent its special correspondent to the front, and for the first time the electric telegraph came into constant use. Even smaller papers found it necessary to publish periodical letters from some local person who was serving with the army.

At the very same time, then, when the great penny papers were establishing themselves in England, making their appeal mainly to a well-to-do and conservative class, presenting long, laborious and conventional news about public affairs, balanced by prolonged and equally conventional discussions of politics, the modern and far more demagogic newspaper of America came into being. The *New York World* is perhaps the truest representative of this period of transition and ferment. Like the *Herald*, it set out primarily to deal in *news*, and thenceforward all papers were obliged to give the first place to the reporter. It dealt not only in news, but in *impressionistic* news, and this impressionistic method was to lead the American Press towards a sensationalism becoming ever more violent, more

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instantaneous and therefore ephemeral in its effect. In the third place it pushed itself upon the attention of the *crowd*. It was a paper for the many, a paper which was written and designed for those hitherto scarcely articulate masses of men who had been aroused by the war into an interest in national affairs. And in the fourth place, and as a natural corollary, it served to express the *nation-making* process of the war. The greatest effect of that war was to make all Americans conscious of American nationality ; it united the States as nothing had served to unite them before. In spite of the fact that the *World* pandered to the tastes of the ignorant, that it appeared to be no more than an intricate business organization for gathering news and advertisements, it also, at the same time, was throwing its weight into the scale of a nationalism which was democratic in another than the party sense of the term.

The strenuousness which found its outlet in the war moved into other channels when the war was at an end. Men looked for some riotous sensation to take its place. Some found it in strange and uncouth religions ; others found it in commerce ; others in base-ball contests ; nearly all in the growing excitement of the Press. Politics had for a moment loomed large when the questions of slavery and of Union were in debate. But the nation, divided between the politics of each State or city, and the politics of the whole Union, had not yet acquired that continuous interest in national politics

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which could give an essentially national, still less political, character to the Press. The imagination was far more quickly inspired by the prodigious growth of mechanical inventions and industrial enterprise. The ever-spreading tentacles of the railway produced a romantic consciousness of the vast interchange of agricultural products and manufactured wealth. Villages, growing into industrial towns, and industrial towns into great cities, impressed men with the miracle of capital and industry. The sky-scrappers alone, which transformed New York and were imitated elsewhere, impressed themselves upon the imagination of citizens as symbols of national wealth. The real masters of the country were seen to be the millionaires rather than the politicians, and men were more impressed by stories of financial enterprise than by stories about the party machines. The newspapers themselves were coming to be controlled by men interested in "big finance." They, like the readers for whom they catered, were absorbed rather in the great game of finance than in the subsidiary game of politics. Stories about industrial magnates, and gossip about financial deals vied with police-court news and tales of violence in the sensation-mongering which appealed to a miscellaneous democracy, now awakening to the first glimmerings of national self-consciousness.

And so the most demagogic, though by no means always the most democratic, papers, set the pace for the rest. The two cent papers of the 'seventies

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and 'eighties catered deliberately for the crowd. The literate, but as yet comparatively uneducated people to whom they appealed, were not the people who could give close and exact attention to affairs of State. They were readers whose attention had to be captured by any device, however crude, however sensational. Routine news became briefer. Head-lines became more startling. Editorial comment was almost abolished. It was seen that to these papers the advertiser resorted, for with their vast circle of readers they gave the largest publicity. All the other newspapers, therefore, were obliged not merely to reduce their price, but to follow the methods of sensationalism which alone could commend them to the attention of the crowd. Most of them in the long run reduced their price to one cent. To secure a big enough circulation they became dependent on the largest and least cultured public ; and to secure their profits they became dependent on the advertiser.

Half a century has seen the birth of this strange phenomenon of the modern American newspaper —an institution which, as a factory, is the most finely organized product of modern invention and business capacity ; which, as an information-giving and opinion-making instrument, may be characterized by saying that it is owned by financial magnates, that its profits come from advertisers, and that its basis is the exploitation of the news-appetite of the crowd.

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But let it be clearly understood that this American newspaper Press is, like the country itself, in a state of transition. Power has been passing more and more from the few to the many ; the many are of mixed racial origin and as yet unclassified ; not for long have they been the objects of the direct solicitation of men rich and educated. Just what they want collectively, this vast agglomeration of units, they do not yet know, and the journalist makes guesses at their tastes. But it should be remembered that the newspaper is not the only maker of opinion. The public school counts for even more. I shall examine further this question —for the Press, a supreme question—of national education and its effects upon taste.

## CHAPTER X.

### DEMOCRATS AND DEMAGOGUES.

THE popular American newspaper preceded the popular newspaper of England. It was not only first in point of time, but it was the model which the English half-penny papers imitated in the first phases of their career. It came first because in the States there is no hard-and-fast distinction between the middle classes and the working classes. As soon as the newspaper had so far perfected its organization that it could supply news quickly and cheaply to the moderately well-to-do, there was no reason why it should not extend itself to a still wider circle. There was no stereotyped caste feeling in those American middle classes ; to address them it was not necessary to adopt a "tone," a tone which in England suggests, not necessarily hostility to the working classes, but patronage or benevolence. Towards the end of the Victorian era there was little or nothing in common between the working-man of the English towns and the bourgeois. The latter was a regular attendant at church ; the former was not. With the one a

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certain style of dress was *de rigueur*; with the other there was no style of dress. The one aspired to be accounted a gentleman; the other knew nothing of such pretensions. Whilst the bourgeois considered himself educated and competent to form an opinion about the condition of China or the constitution of Paradise, the working-man had no leisure for ideas and was satisfied if he could sign his name. In America, outside New England, there were no such rigid distinctions. The bourgeois had often sprung from parents who had been labourers or alien immigrants. The masters of industry were often men of the humblest origin. The main distinctions were distinctions of wealth rather than of social origin, and there were seldom any profound differences between the feelings, sympathies, and general outlook of the merchant or manufacturer and those of the English-speaking workers whom he employed. If America was plutocratic in government and distribution of power, she was democratic in sentiment. Hence it is easy to see that a newspaper which was no longer addressed exclusively to a small class interested in ideas, which had already extended its appeal to the well-to-do bourgeois, had no reason for stopping there. There was no fixed barrier of sentiment to prevent it from flowing over and reaching the proletariat. As soon as the papers were cheapened, it was natural that they should be adapted, like any other article of commerce, to the crowd. The

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popular one cent paper indicated the potentialities of American democracy.

Nevertheless, it was in many respects unfortunate for the English-speaking world that the popular newspaper should have originated in the United States. But before I discuss further that universal misfortune, it is well to recognize that the Americans have reasons also to congratulate themselves on their early move. It was, in the first place, a striking evidence of the fact that it was in America that elementary education first became universal or nearly universal. It showed that she had become a nation of citizens interested in a larger sphere of life than that of the home and the immediate experiences of the individual—a nation of men and women who wished to share with their fellow-citizens at least some kind of impressionistic view of the world about them. The newspaper which addressed one or two hundred thousand people simultaneously was giving them, to some extent at least, the same picture of the world; it was making them perceive, at least in some vague way, the same phantoms of fact, and experience the same sort of sensation. Each newspaper brought these scores of thousands of people into some sort of harmony; and tended to create, at the same moment, throughout the whole circle of its readers, a common feeling about affairs—trivial affairs, perhaps, but still the same affairs.

I am very far from suggesting that the influence

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of the “yellow” Press was educative. I do not say that the coloured “funny” pictures of the Sunday paper, that the colossal headlines, the exaggerated phraseology, or the startling display of base-ball figures, were in any sense edifying. But at any rate the popular papers were now creating a platform from which the mass of the people could be addressed. The slang language they adopted might be painful to refined tastes ; but it was significant that *any* language at all should have been discovered, *any* means of reaching simultaneously the ears of the million. The facts which were commended to public attention might be unimportant facts, or might be important but presented in a distorted form ; nevertheless, *some* facts and *some* impressions of facts were being presented to the crowd, the vast crowd which had hitherto been ignored at all times save times of dangerous crisis. The emotions upon which the newspapers played might be of a barbarous and even nauseous character, but it was something that the emotions of the crowd could be stirred at all, day by day, and with shrewd deliberation. I do not say that the popular journals precisely *expressed* the minds of their readers, that they made the American crowd distinctly *articulate* ; but they were at any rate in direct touch with the crowd ; they studied this various, shifting, amorphous mass of inchoate opinion, and made it thrill in response to their sensational appeal. It could scarcely be said that the crowd was being

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helped to think, but it was something that it should be made to gasp simultaneously, even at the order of an interested millionaire. The appearance of the Yellow Press was a recognition of the fact that the majority of the nation not only existed, but that it might have opinions, that it certainly had tastes, that it possessed a *consciousness* of life. It held this vast implication, that the people who can be spoken to are the people who will also *speak*. A popular Press—that is to say, a Press which can appeal to the least persons in a nation, and to all of them—is at least a step towards the democratic ideal of an articulate nation.

And journalism as a whole has reaped another advantage from the American popular newspaper. If it is not altogether an advantage that the newspaper should be produced as an article of commerce, it is wholly advantageous that commercial efficiency should be brought to the task of organizing news, improving machinery, and distributing newspapers. There can be no good journalism unless the journalistic machine runs efficiently. And here the Americans have taught much to the whole world. They have reduced office organization to an exact science. They have the best and the quickest printing machines. The mechanical side of a newspaper is organized with a view to avoiding friction, under the threefold control of a superintendent of the press-room, a foreman of the composing-room, and a foreman of the stereo-

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typers. The editorial rooms are equipped with everything that the reporter or the "re-writer" or the special writer is likely to require. I have had opportunities of using the reference libraries and examining the system of filing in several American offices, and I have been astonished at their completeness, and at the perfectly systematic way in which they are kept up-to-date and rendered accessible. The reference library and the files of the New York *World*, for example, are models of what such things should be. The staff, moreover, is disciplined with something of the exactness of an army. Every man has his exact sphere of operations, and within that sphere he is allowed to exercise his judgment, though he is severely criticized on results. The more important papers are amply staffed, and the importance of *direction* is fully realized. Thus, the Editor-in-Chief, or Editorial Manager, has, as a rule, no precisely defined duties beyond those of controlling the general policy and scheme of the paper, and inspiring the "Editorial" ("Leader") page. Beneath him, the Managing Editor has the whole daily conduct of the paper in his hands, but he too works through responsible heads of departments, chief of whom are the day and night City Editors, controlling the reporters and all events happening within the City, and the Telegraph Editor, superintending reports from other cities and from abroad. One man is generally engaged in editing the special features of

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the enlarged Sunday paper, and there are special correspondents, finance and sport experts, dramatic and literary critics, etc., as in England. And, altogether outside the editorial department, exercising a power often greater than that of the Editor-in-Chief, is the Business Manager, who controls the whole mechanism, the distribution, the advertisements, the revenue and expenditure of the office. The complex organization which goes to the making of a newspaper has reached the highest stage of business efficiency in the chief American offices. For producing the sort of paper which they desired to produce the great American newspaper owners have for the last twenty years shown the way to the rest of the world.

It must be understood that I am for the moment speaking in a general way, and not discriminating between the many different types of paper which are to be found in the States. There are, of course, papers which vary greatly in commercial efficiency and still more in professional honesty, just as there are papers which still cater for the intellectual classes and lie on the stalls cheek by jowl with the most outrageous of yellow "rags." But what I am for the moment content to observe is that efficiency in the production of a newspaper, no matter what its character, has for twenty years been more apparent in America than it ever was in England before the foundation of the *Daily Mail*. This is to be put on the credit side of American

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popular journalism, which, as we have already seen, presupposed a real democratic sentiment no less than a business instinct on the part of those who exploited it.

Nevertheless, it was an unfortunate thing for the world that the cheap popular newspaper should have made its first appearance in America. The misfortune arises from the facts of sheer geography and history. The reader who has followed my argument to this point will remember that I attempted to show in Chapter II. that the organic State is "the State which is in process of becoming articulate," and that in every such State the real power extends itself to those who are *informed* about the organism as a whole, who are brought together by the fact of sharing information about matters of supreme common interest. I showed that there could be no nation and no real public opinion in the ancient Persian Empire or in the Roman Empire, because there was no means of intercommunication ; that before the days of printing there could be no genuine democracy in any area much larger than that of the ancient city-State. Even in a comparatively small country like England the distances were great enough to frustrate the formation of a composite public opinion and a democracy ; despotism and oligarchy only began to break down when the country was made more compact and, as it were, smaller, by printing and quick transit.

Now, America from the very first seems to have been aware of the formidable obstacle to nation-making presented by her vast area, and she set herself to overcome the difficulty by setting up electric telegraphs as early as possible, by multiplying her railway lines and increasing the speed of her trains, by linking up the country districts by telephone and trolley cars, by giving infinite thought to quick printing and the quick distribution of papers. But she has not yet been quick enough to overcome completely these prodigious natural obstacles of size. She has been compelled to preserve her separate States for purposes of administration, and though she can scatter books, magazines and even weekly periodicals over the whole area, she has not yet been able to produce a daily newspaper which could effectively serve even a tithe of the community. More than that, so effectively has each great city acquired a sort of metropolitan character of its own, refusing to bow to the supremacy of any other great city, that it has insisted on having its own separate institutions, and the interests of the citizens centre there, on the spot, rather than at any other focal point of the whole Union ; and newspapers, which might be made to serve a much larger area than they do, are for the most part content with a circulation in one city and in the smaller towns within a comparatively small area.

The American magazine differs from the Ameri-

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can newspaper in this important respect, that it is a national, and not a State journal ; that it is broad and cosmopolitan, not local and restricted. For it is distributed and read all over the States. It has to deal with questions in which all Americans are interested. It has sometimes an enormous circulation, far exceeding that of any American newspaper, and it could in some cases subsist upon circulation alone without the profit of advertisements. That is to say, some of the best popular magazines in America are rich enough to pay their contributors well, and sufficiently free from financial influences to be disinterested ; and appealing as they do to a widely scattered public, they must be broad and cosmopolitan, or at least national, in their treatment. The American newspaper differs both from the American magazine and the English newspaper, in that it cannot be a completely national organ ; it must be to some extent localized. The vast size of the States makes it impossible to distribute a daily paper even over a considerable fraction of the whole country. There is no single journal which can focus all the news of the country under a single perspective, and lay its sheets daily before the inhabitants of every city. The only organized effort in this direction is that of the *American*, and the *Chicago American* is not the same paper as the *New York American*, and the *Boston American* differs from both. Mr. Brisbane's contributions may appear simultaneously all over the States,

but for the most part the *American* which is produced in one city is necessarily a different paper from the *American* which is produced elsewhere. Thus it is that every great city in the United States produces its own newspapers. Though New York is the metropolis, its papers have not the ascendancy throughout America, or even a corresponding area in America, which London papers can exercise throughout England. Philadelphia, near as it is to New York, has powerful journals of its own, which suffice to keep the New York papers out of the Philadelphia market. The distance which separates Boston from New York would in England be considered no bar to the early distribution of a London paper. But the one-cent papers of New York, arriving comparatively late in Boston, are sold in that city for three cents; and make no attempt to compete effectively with the journals produced on the spot.

And it should be observed that even the most popular American newspapers, large as their circulations are, are large only in comparison with the English penny paper of the Victorian age. They are content with circulations which are small in comparison with those built up in England by the half-penny Press. When I first came to New York I was astonished at the vast dimensions of the one-cent papers, consisting as they often do of twenty pages even in a week-day issue. Though a half-penny in England has for most purposes a higher

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purchasing power than a cent in America, the English half-penny paper seldom contains more than twelve pages. Now the London half-penny morning paper, consisting of ten or twelve pages, cannot be made to pay without a circulation of at least 400,000 copies. Yet this spacious American paper, with its twenty pages, can subsist upon a circulation of 200,000 copies. This curious difference is to be accounted for in several ways. It costs a great deal to distribute an English paper to places one hundred, two hundred, and three hundred miles from the office where it is produced ; whereas the New York paper, sold at a cent in the city, is sold at two cents and three cents at remote places. But more important is its inflated advertisement revenue. Business houses in America have more faith in the results of advertising than have similar business houses in England, and, as there are more *new* business concerns in the younger country, there is obviously a greater necessity for advertising their existence. Moreover, the paper is localized, and it is the local paper which attracts the local advertiser—it is read by his constant customers. The established American paper means *business*. It is a well-devised, admirably organized *business* institution. On this side, at any rate, it does not fail. As a *business* concern, the newspaper is efficiently run. It is usually controlled, not so much by an editor whose main interest may happen to lie in politics or ideas, but

by a business manager who is whole-heartedly and frankly interested in business.

It is a well-known fact in England, and I believe in other European countries, that there is a far lower sense of public honour revealed in the conduct of municipal politics than in that of national politics. This is partly because the personal interests of local magnates are very much bound up with local public affairs ; such men have material interests in municipal administration, whereas Parliamentary politics are of far less direct pecuniary concern to the average politician. But it is also—and this is more important—because municipal affairs are more restricted in their nature ; they do not so readily connect themselves with the larger principles of public life ; they do not stir the imagination ; and the settlement of them is not conclusive—it may be over-ruled by the national authority, and therefore does not evoke the same high sense of responsibility. In the same way this division of interest in America between the nation and the State, or between the nation and the city, has weakened the sense of public honour. Local plutocrats loom large in the public life of a city ; the broader, more cosmopolitan, and humane interests tend to be neglected. The journal which makes its appeal, not to America, but to one city or State, loses to that extent in dignity ; national politics is not a continuous subject of debate in its columns ; national ideas are sacrificed to local discussion.

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Broadly speaking, then, it will be true to say that the American newspaper is owned by a man or a syndicate interested primarily in certain financial affairs (I am aware, of course, that there are exceptions); that in so far as the paper has any interest beyond getting itself circulated and bringing in advertisements, that interest will be identical with the particular business interests of the man or syndicate behind it. The English penny newspaper was generally owned by persons whose aspirations were political or social, or who, through the force of tradition, respected the political and social bias. But when we bear in mind that the American paper is, and always has been, rather a State paper than a national paper, we shall see that it was sure to follow the lines of State affairs rather than national affairs. And public affairs in States consist of matters relating to syndicates, corporations—in general, finance. The public interest which the ordinary American citizen experiences is an interest in commercial and financial affairs rather than in those political affairs which interest the average Englishman. State interests tend to dominate national interests. The nearer looms larger than what is more remote. The commercialism of the city is the local topic of interest which the newspapers discuss, foster and perpetuate.

I cannot resist the conviction that it is the localization of American papers, the impossibility, as things stand, of their being national papers, which accounts

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for so many of their obvious defects. It partly accounts for their commercialism. It partly accounts for their inaccessibility to ideas. How little space is devoted even to politics, excepting at particularly exciting moments when, for example, Mr. Roosevelt may be on the war-path! How great a space is devoted to businesses and corporations! The "leading article," or "editorial," is a feature which no English morning paper has dared to neglect; but the corresponding editorial page in America is generally beneath contempt. Usually it is the part that is the worst written, and it is entirely lacking in authority. (It must be remembered that I am speaking of the average newspaper, not of those more dignified papers several of which still exist.) Dramatic criticism in most papers resolves itself into the most trivial stage gossip and personalities; it is distinctly inferior to the dramatic criticism of English papers, and infinitely inferior to that of Paris. The literary columns, if not conspicuous by their absence, have generally the same characteristics as the dramatic columns. The *New York Times* has an excellently arranged literary supplement, but I have found that it rather "notices" than criticizes books. The *Herald* devotes considerable space to foreign news, but it characteristically devoted ten inches to the opening of a Kennel Show by Queen Mary when it could only afford two inches to the Irish Home Rule Bill.

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To speak generally, American editors who may happen to be men of broad, general ideas are not encouraged to apply those ideas to their papers ; for the average daily journal does not exist to propagate ideas. In that direction its promoters have usually no special pride or ambition. They are business men. Papers are the commodity in which they deal—an elastic commodity which on occasion may subserve other business interests. It is their belief that the general public—the majority for which they cater—demands constant sensation of the crudest kind ; that it demands variety ; that it detests continuity ; that it prefers the language of slang to the English language. They cater, in fact, for every one who can read, for every one who has come under the spell of elementary education. Having set out to appeal to the tastes of the most ignorant or even the most brutalized of readers, they have persuaded themselves that these are the majority. Let me not be misunderstood. I am not attempting to disparage the motives of the American newspaper owner. His motives are just as good as those of the Victorian Englishman in the same position of power. The desire to win a title is not nobler than the desire to increase a fortune. The commercial system of exploiting the coarsest tastes of the community is not inferior to the system devised in England for exploiting the sentimentalism and the faddism of the public. I would rather see the frank exploitation of the depravity of New York

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than the insincere exploitation of what passes for "conscience" in England.

I do not for a moment suggest that the New York papers exclusively exploit the depravity of citizens. That would not even be good business. As a matter of fact, in these voluminous sheets which constitute an American newspaper, I am astonished to find what a quantity of real news there is hidden in its recesses, what a number of vital human subjects are touched upon, side by side with the trivial and unpleasant. What has really happened to give them a worse name than they deserve is the language they have invented, the mode of expression which they have borrowed from their most ignorant readers ; a language which the journalist has to learn, through which he has to interpret his facts. The headlines set the standard which the reporter ignores at his peril. "Black Jack Rules for Chicago Week"; "Boy's Joy Dance at Catching Fish Brings His Death"; "His New Sweetheart is Old One after all"; "Women Slap Faces in War on Car Smokers"; "'You acted Mean and Low,' Gaynor Tells Waiters"; "Crippled Newsboy Finds Curb Market has Angel"; "Certain He'll Marry Her"; "Cut Prices just like Fire at the Gary Luncheon"; "Heinie Assaults the Ball until Umpire butts in." These are a few headlines taken at random from a single issue of one of the most vigorous and successful of New York papers. This is the language which is supposed to appeal

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to the reader, to arrest his attention; it is in language modelled on this that the reporter must present his news. It is, of course, partly a newspaper convention, a custom maintained because the newspaper managers believe that the people still consist of raw settlers, of men with the tastes of backwoodsmen. But it is partly, no doubt, truly adjusted to the taste of the crowd. If the crowd was to be courted, if it was to be addressed, it must hear a language which it could understand.

The United States, then, may take the credit for having invented the cheap paper and brought the mob within the influence of printed news. But it was unfortunate that a country, geographically handicapped for the development of a public national sentiment, should have laid down the type of the popular journal.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ENTER THE *DAILY MAIL*.

ALREADY the penny Victorian paper has become invested with a hoary tradition. How quickly we become accustomed to things and persuade ourselves that they have existed for ever! The penny paper, after all, is only a thing of yesterday, yet many middle-aged men to-day look back upon it with that sort of respect which is generally reserved for antiquity. It was less than fifty years ago that Matthew Arnold was commenting upon it as a new and ominous influence—“Yes,” he exclaimed, “the world will soon be the Philistines’! and then, with every voice, not of thunder, silenced, and the whole earth filled and ennobled every morning by the magnificent roaring of the young lions of the *Daily Telegraph*, we shall all yawn in one another’s faces with the dismallest, the most unimpeachable gravity.” But at the very time when he was writing, and indeed before the Victorian penny newspaper existed, the conditions which were to sweep it away were already germinating. Things were moving very quickly in that complacent nineteenth century, even in Eng-

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land. They were to move more quickly still in the twentieth. But it is only in the retrospect that we observe how quickly the surface of life has changed, just as we need to absent ourselves from old familiar scenes to see how drastically time has dealt with them. It was less than half a century ago that Arnold was speaking of his own "vivacity" (a sufficiently sedate vivacity, surely!) as "the last sparkle of flame before we are all in the dark, the last glimpse of colour before we all go into drab,—the drab of the earnest, prosaic, practical, austere literary future." And already we are thinking of that "drabness," that "gravity," as the all but interminable prelude to our own vivacity! We have again changed our manner of speech, or rather, perhaps, those who are writers have found themselves before a changed audience. "Earnest, prosaic, practical, austere literary" writing is no longer tolerated in most of our journals; we have harked back to a "vivacity" more apparent than that of the distinguished critic.

But the influence which was to bring us back to "vivacity" was not the influence which Arnold would have welcomed. Educationist as he was, he was not one of those who admired the intellectual product of a smattering of knowledge. The vivacity he esteemed was that of minds subtly impregnated with ideas, an *esprit* belonging to the aristocracy of taste. The vivacity of the new age is democratic, an evidence of protest against the

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*idées fixes* of the conventional puritan classes ; it lacks that Attic, or aristocratic salt which enables urbanity to unbend, and it substitutes a violence which the urbane would call “ provincial.”

It needs much detachment to be able to read any literary critic of fifty years ago without realizing acutely that not only the literature of his time, but also the newspapers to which he might occasionally allude, lay outside the ken of a majority of the nation. We cannot say that this does not matter ; that important ideas are always addressed to the few. Surely writers of the future will be much influenced by the fact that the writers of to-day are endeavouring to address the many ; that their very sympathies are therefore drawn towards larger tracts of life ; that these sympathies are being registered in records not all of which will be deemed worthless ; that authors and journalists are endeavouring to become mouthpieces of society in *all* its aspects. Dickens strode forward into the new era when he began to present his vivid pictures of the life of the poor ; but the grotesquerie and picturesqueness of his method destroyed the value of his work on one side at least ; it showed that he was looking at the poor through the spectacles of a member of another class. He looked upon them from above, and made them quaint objects of interest and curiosity ; and if he made men sympathize, it was only with that sort of sympathy which vegetarians extend to cattle.

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The life of the majority of the English nation still simmered beneath the surface when the lions of the *Daily Telegraph* began to roar. What part did these, the human cattle, the great majority, take in the conscious life of the nation? They were hewers of wood and drawers of water, further removed from the well-to-do classes than they had been only a century before. Withdrawn from the friendly life of the small town or village to the herd life of the slum and the factory, they were thousands, millions of unknown, inarticulate units. Many of them, indeed, were endowed with the formal privileges of citizenship by the Reform Acts. But what was the vote to men who could not even read, who understood nothing of the game of politics, and had no inkling of the policies for which their so-called representatives stood? They were driven in herds to the poll by those who were most lavish in "nursing" constituencies. From the community as a whole they received little except a bare subsistence and the patronage of charity; and in return they contributed little except the labour of their hands, and a spectacle for the awakening or salving of consciences. So far as citizenship and morality were concerned, they were as much outside the real life of the nation as the Helots were outside the community of Sparta.

Elementary education, it is true, was beginning to have its effect upon them long before the Act of 1870 made it universal. There were washer-

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women who could read in De Quincey's time, and in the middle of the century commerce was requiring ill-paid clerks who could read and write but were no better educated than artisans. What did they read, if they read at all, these civically submerged ones? Some of them, no doubt, continued to get hold of newspapers. But it is quite certain that the newspapers were not written for them, were not in any way designed for them. Probably some of the most intelligent of them, chiefly in Scotland, and the North of England, read *Chambers's Journal*, an interesting magazine which has always stood singularly aloof from the conventions of journalism, metropolitan or provincial. A larger number of them probably read the *Penny Magazine*, *Household Words*, the *Family Herald*, and the *London Journal*, homely periodicals which seem to have circulated among the middle-middle and lower-middle classes, and the artisan class—journals which always concerned themselves with individual matters, and eschewed public questions and *la haute politique*. Such periodicals, along with the devotional books and the pious stories which were put into their hands, evidently supplied the main reading matter for those of the working classes who read at all. They were still kept in blind ignorance as to all ideas excepting religious ideas; there was no one whose business or interest it was to put before them any other ideas—excepting at critical, desperate moments when the political agi-

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tator and organizer tried to rouse them to a sense of their condition. They had not yet learnt to be interested in the politics of the day ; no regular channel of information was yet open to them ; the Press was not their Press—it did not speak their language, nor voice their sentiments, nor appeal to their sense of reason or prejudice. In the 'sixties the working classes had not yet been linked up, by the exchange of knowledge, or the interchange of *talk*, with the body corporate. They were still an amorphous mass of humanity, blind wielders of a vote, great only as a potentiality, a possible source of violent revolution, feared, but uninformed, much talked-of, but inarticulate. No wonder legislators perceived that the ever-growing proletariat, converted by the Machiavellian hand of Beaconsfield into an *electorate*, must be educated.

And so from 1870 onwards it was educated. That is to say, it was taught to read, write and count. The "three R's" became something to reckon with. Within ten years of the passing of that Act all the very young men and women in the country were able to read and write. They could read letters and circulars addressed to them by the officials of trade unions and co-operative societies. They could even answer these letters. Their eyes too could gaze appreciatively on the staring hoardings which advertised foods and medicines, or called upon them to "Vote for X—." Not only were their votes needed. Manufacturers wanted their shillings

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and their pennies—so many shillings, and so many pennies ! They began to be an object of solicitude. The manufacturer had millions of things he would like to sell, and he began to address them on his advertisement boards. The literary hack discovered that there was a new public for his effusions, that there were hundreds of thousands of little boys longing for a literary sensation ; and the “penny horrible” became a horrible reality. We have all seen them in shop windows and perhaps purchased them ourselves : *In Red and Scarlet—Murder Will Out — The Suicide of Susan — Lavinia's False Love.* For these same little boys the purveyors of illustrated journals hit upon *Comic Cuts, Funny Cuts* and many other “cuts” which were most of them based upon the famous model of *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday*. What an assortment it was ! What an outpouring of strange levity and uproarious vulgarity, an exact counterpart to the “funny man” of the American Sunday papers ! What a Walpurgis Night's dream was here provided for the small boy who could spend his first earned pennies upon the delights of learning !

It is always the speculator who rushes in where angels are too squeamish to tread. If the American speculator was the first to devastate the minds of uneducated but literate citizens, that was merely because America led the way in making the uneducated citizens literate. The English business

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man followed the same course when the same opportunity offered. When Forster had provided the youth of Great Britain with the boon of the "three R's," it was not the Walter Family which stepped down from its pedestal to lay the store of political wisdom at their feet. It was the proprietor of *Tit-Bits*. Sir George Newnes afterwards retrieved his reputation by founding a great evening newspaper and a creditable publishing house. None the less he must go down to history as the man who satisfied the cravings of the literate working classes by giving them, not the *Westminster Gazette*, but *Tit-Bits*.

That was in 1880. Still more significant, not on its own account, but for its consequences, was the appearance of *Answers* in 1888, published by the brothers Harmsworth, and a little later *Pearson's Weekly*, an imitation of *Answers* as *Answers* was an imitation of *Tit-Bits*. It was not, as I have said, the proprietors of *The Times* who were to step down from their pedestals to give instruction to the masses. On the contrary it was the founder of *Answers* who was to rise up and conquer *The Times*, and the founder of *Tit-Bits* who was to own the organ of philosophical Liberalism.

Whether it was a lucky accident, or whether it was an act of extraordinary foresight and perception, the foundation of *Tit-Bits* marks the commencement of a new era in the history of the English Press and of the English nation. The mission-

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ary, it has often been said, leads the way, and the dealer in gin follows. If John Forster was the missionary, the purveyors of literary gin were to be the pioneers of civilization. The missionary zeal with which King Leopold undertook the civilization of the Congo may compare with the zeal for the uplifting of the working classes in England by means of education. The English working classes were taught to read in order that they might buy *Tit-Bits*, *Answers*, *Pearson's Weekly*, *Funny Cuts*, *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday*, penny "horribles," and worse literature! I do not, of course, say that that was the intention; but it is perfectly certain that that was the most obvious result. It became obvious to those who were beginning to concern themselves in the University Settlement movement. It was impossible to walk about in the East End of London without observing those newspaper shops, and the almost exclusively sensational, often criminal literature, which was exposed for sale. *Tit-Bits*, needless to say, was a fountain of purity in the rubbish heap of degrading literature, which facilitated betting, made dirtiness amusing, and exploited the worst tastes of the young. Nor must we fail to observe that the Sunday penny newspapers, those which professed to give the news of the whole week—as distinguished from the *Observer* and the *Sunday Times*—that is to say, the only newspapers which were consistently read by working men because

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Sunday was the only day when they had leisure to read—were not, and indeed are not to this day, one whit superior to the much-abused Sunday papers of the United States. They revelled, and still revel, in murder stories, divorce-court scandals, turf gossip, tales of wife beatings, horrible accidents, whilst news from what the upper and middle classes regard as the “great world” was, and is, either entirely ignored or relegated to out-of-the-way paragraphs.

This was the kind of literature which was poured into the slum bookstalls of every town in England. All the boys and young men and women who had been taught to read were incited to turn to this sort of sensation for the killing of their leisure time, for the satisfaction of the unsatisfied craving for life. Many a late-Victorian householder has been heard dilating with horror upon the books which their “general” servants devoured. Many a young University man at Toynbee Hall and Oxford House was disposed to trace to this cause the growth of hooliganism in the slums. It is true there were not wanting journals which aimed at counteracting the influence of such literature. The *War Cry*, the organ of the Salvation Army, was not less sensational in its style, but I believe that it was published, not from commercial motives, but for religious and propagandist purposes. There is no possible question about the *Clarion*, which for years fought an uphill fight and at last acquired a power-

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ful influence amongst the best classes of working men. We may see, perhaps, the patronizing hand of the well-meaning middle-class propagandist in the *Family Herald*, which still continued; and in several small journals of a domestic and religious character, which were read in the homes of artisans. But though it is possible to name many disinterested and well-intentioned working-class journals of the 'eighties and 'nineties, the fact remains that a careful observer of the workings of the Education Act, basing his judgment upon the circulation of literature, might come to the general conclusion that it was contributing to the intellectual debauchery of the working classes, and that its influence was more subtly deleterious than that of the public-house.

In fact, the first result of the Education Act was to provide the working classes with a new capacity, a new taste, and a new want. And whenever a new want makes itself apparent amongst the million it is seldom that there are lacking manufacturers who will set out to pander to it in the ordinary spirit of commerce. The Education Act created an appetite. The man of business is generally sooner in the field than the idealist, and the bulk of the literature which he provided for the new reading class in the 'eighties and 'nineties catered for the most evident, the most universal tastes, which are seldom the noblest. Alfred and Harold Harmsworth, now Lord Northcliffe and Sir Harold

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Harmsworth, came into the business of journalism as a *business*. Like many others of their time, they exploited in a business spirit the new market opened up by the acquired reading habit of the masses. There was the evident demand; they could supply it. Their method was not unique. They made money as many other men were making money, and by precisely the same method.

But the genius of the Harmsworths—I think it is not too much to call it genius—lay in the fact that they did something very much more. They did not stop at *Answers*. They were not content to go on satisfying a taste for just those trifles which they had found to be so marketable. They launched out on the path of revolution, the course of which was perhaps not planned by imaginative foresight, but was so quickly and so often adjusted to change as to suggest divination.

Let us be quite clear what it was that Alfred Harmsworth and his colleagues really accomplished —what sort of a revolution they kindled in journalism and in life. Now, there is a certain sense in which it is true to say that they initiated nothing. They did not invent the type of paper to which *Answers* belonged. Sir George Newnes did that. They did not invent the half-penny daily paper. The *Evening News* had been started in 1881, and the *Star* in 1888, and in 1892 the half-penny *Morning Leader* appeared as a sort of adjunct to the *Star*. The public was already familiar with these

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journals before the *Daily Mail* was conceived. The *Morning Leader* was a small sheet mainly read by clerks who could never have endured the long reports of the penny dailies, and in the course of time it acquired a certain following amongst the working classes. It was a vivacious paper, economically produced, and for a time it prospered in spite of competition with the *Daily Mail*, and it would probably have continued to do so if some of the penny papers had not reduced their price to a half-penny.

Nor did the Harmsworths invent the system which made newspapers depend upon advertisement revenue. All the great newspapers already lived upon advertisement revenue rather than upon sales. Nor did they invent the device of sensational headlines or discover the attractiveness of scandal and terror ; these things were known in the seventeenth century, and twenty years ago were familiar to all Americans, and to all Englishmen who read the popular Sunday papers.

And yet it is not too much to say that Alfred Harmsworth represents the revolution in journalism at the end of the nineteenth century as distinctly as John Walter represented the revolution in journalism a century earlier. It was inevitable that there should be a John Walter. It was equally inevitable that there should be a Harmsworth. The one was instrumental in introducing the daily organ of news and opinion for middle-

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class readers. The other discovered a way of producing a popular paper and making it an article of commerce.

We have seen that there were three cogent reasons why a *Times* should have come into existence at the end of the eighteenth century. First, there was a large, literate middle-class public waiting for a daily newspaper. Secondly, a great war, following upon a convulsive revolution of ideas, was shaking Europe and arousing Englishmen into a keener interest in public affairs. Thirdly, it was an age of mechanical invention which enabled the Walters to improve both their news supply and the machinery by which copies of *The Times* were multiplied.

And there were three similar reasons which made a *Daily Mail* inevitable at the end of the nineteenth century.

I. We have seen that a vast literate public had been created by the Education Act of 1870. But it is important to realize that universal elementary education was only one aspect of the great change which was sweeping over England as it was sweeping over every country in the world. It would surely be a mistake to regard that "public conscience" which was so conspicuous in the middle classes of the nineteenth century as evidence of special grace and virtue in our grandfathers. It was a feeling which was being forced upon them by overwhelming social facts of the time. It

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was not because a few men who had been sweated in factories rose to be employers of labour—such men were often the least sympathetic of task-masters. It was rather that educated people were more and more forced to recognize that they depended, that the existence of the whole nation depended, upon the organized labour of the working classes. On the one hand employers needed efficient workmen, and clamoured for the creation of efficient workmen. On the other hand the desperation which led to Chartism and afterwards to Socialism, the organization of labour into unions and the discovery of the weapon of the strike, the foundation of the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party, were all evidences of the fact that the proletariat was becoming conscious of its own existence, that in this way and that it was groping, vaguely and blindly, for an instrument through which it could become active. And yet through all these decades when the penny Victorian Press was thundering out its empty formulæ for party politicians, the nearest it got to describing the volcano upon which society rested was to proclaim its humanitarian good-will. It was only in the slumberous, undirected movements as of some Titan beneath Etna that the vitality and potentiality of the masses could be discerned.

But the capacity to read and write made all the difference. That capacity meant that they were beginning to be equipped with the means of enter-

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ing into the life of the nation, not subconsciously as before, but consciously. When once those millions could be confronted with the news of their own nation and of the world, when the same facts about life and similar ideas about life were being presented to them, simultaneously, they would possess some basis of opinion, some common knowledge which must precede co-operation ; they would begin to be a *class*, instead of a herd ; a class whose feelings could be expressed, whose vague energies could be focussed into a *will*.

But that was not to be accomplished all at once. It has not been accomplished yet. At first, as we have seen, this new capacity to read merely lent itself to exploitation at the hands of literary garbage-makers. The democracy was like a child that waves its arms and its legs and opens its mouth in the vain effort to speak. When it learnt to read and write and count it possessed no more than a rudimentary instrument for acquiring knowledge. It used this instrument wildly and spasmodically. It could not at once apply it to the unlocking of ideas. At first it was little more than a means of expressing in a new way the animal vitality that cried out for activity or excitement—that sort of warped vitality which finds expression in the lighted, crowded thoroughfare of the Mile End Road or the Bank holiday entertainments on Hampstead Heath. Printed matter was thrust in the way of the crowd, literature designed to catch their atten-

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tion, to incite their untrained minds to some sort of interest, however momentary. Those who catered for them discovered that they had never been taught to *concentrate* attention on ideas ; so they presented them with fragments of ideas, snippets which struck home in a few violent words, giving place to other snippets before they could be wearied, to new sensations which might flog the fatigued mind into momentary interest.

Here, then, was this great proletariat of England, struggling in a clumsy, undirected way into a larger place in the national life, demonstrating its existence by trade combinations and political committees, compelling the upper classes to take an interest in them, to visit them, to study and even classify them —as Charles Booth and Mr. Rowntree did—getting better wages for themselves and making philanthropists attend to the improvement of factories and slums—here was this proletariat developing within itself the desultory habit of reading. No matter that its attention was mainly drawn to comic anecdotes, to gruesome “tragedies,” to sensational gossip —it was something that it should be reading at all, and developing the reading habit.

Here was the chance that the Harmsworths seized. They saw this new market for journalism. They appreciated this lust for some violent enhancement of life, for the stimulating of fatigued appetites ; they understood this craving for an excitement easily obtained, for a sensation that exacted no visible

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toll upon the energies. Who that had watched a Cockney crowd disporting itself in moments of relaxation might not have guessed that when once it began to look for pleasure from print it would require just such a flamboyant and aimless activity as it seeks in shrieking roundabouts, the noise of bands, and the excitement of the public-house? The Harmsworths had actually stumbled upon the desires of the crowd when they started *Answers*. They were only carrying their experience a stage farther when in 1896 they founded the *Daily Mail*.

At first it looked as if they were carrying their experience but a very little way farther. They were adopting the American method in earnest. Every day the young men of the *Daily Mail* were sent out to whip up new sensations. No matter what the subject, no matter whether it was or was not what used to be called a "matter of public interest," it was enough if it provided a good "story," if it was piquant, sensational, exciting. Those who were accustomed to the old-fashioned papers could find in the *Daily Mail* little or none of the news which they habitually looked for; they found other news which seemed to them distorted, exaggerated, or untrue. Whatever was presented in these columns was short, snippetty, overwhelmed by its headlines, and, as it seemed to most educated men, out of all proportion to the importance or unimportance of the subject. Respectable people shook their heads at the paper, or made fun of it. No-

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body treated it seriously. It was looked upon as sheer "yellow journalism," imported from America. It was declared to be a "rag," the last phase in the degeneration of journalism.

But there are two supremely important facts which we must not overlook. The first is, that in adopting the style of the American papers, the popular Sunday papers, and of *Answers*, in discussing subjects interesting to those who could read but were otherwise uneducated, in appealing to the curiosity and excitability of the crowd, they found themselves, as a matter of actual experience, addressing a very mixed crowd. Their treatment appealed to the working classes, but it appealed equally to a class which is quite as uneducated, but which hates to be identified with the working-class—that vast community of poor clerks who form so large a population in every town. And thirdly, it appealed to a great many uneducated women of the so-called educated class; whilst, of course, in the fourth place, it appealed to all, educated or uneducated, who could be entertained by the sheer spectacle of the thing, who read from curiosity. All of these people, belonging to totally different classes, having different interests, were addressed simultaneously, through the same medium, through the impact of the same verbal impressions.

The second, and more important point, is this. The *Daily Mail* was a daily paper. Though it addressed the crowd in the language of the crowd,

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though it dwelt often, and, for the most part, upon trivial and insignificant events, nevertheless, it so far followed the newspaper convention that it professed to give all the news of the day. It was actually the first really popular daily paper which addressed the crowd—in the unconventional language which the crowd could understand and in the snippetty manner which exacted little from the attention—upon *public and national affairs*. To these affairs it gave, at the first, but a scanty and half-hearted treatment. So little prominence was given to these national questions that at first sight it seemed that the *Daily Mail* might become little more significant than a daily edition of *Answers*. After the first interest occasioned by this flamboyant and violent journal, the educated public pooh-poohed or ignored it, thinking that as an organ of opinion it would flicker out, and remain perhaps a widely circulating but uninfluential “rag.”

And that indeed it might have become if it had not chosen the right moment for existing. But as it chanced the Harmsworths had hit upon just the precise moment, not only when a war was about to happen, but when some war inevitably must have happened. It was not only the moment when the working classes were being aroused to a feverish effort to think and feel and stretch themselves out towards life, but when the whole nation, aware perhaps of that deep stirring within its womb, was becoming conscious of itself in a new way, was per-

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ceiving the processes of change, was wearying of the old and unreal formulæ, and was experiencing a new excitement, a lust for some collective action on the part of the organism, some demonstration of its eagerness for revolution or war. No man could have told in the late 'nineties whether the country was heading for revolution or war. But that it was heading for one or the other, for some violent outlet after a period of gestation, has become evident at least in the retrospect. As it happened, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Kipling, and the *Daily Mail*, plumped for *war*—for the most sensational, the most diverting, and at the same time a supreme national topic. Men and women, boys and girls, who had sought distraction in sensational tales of murder, suicide, arson and divorce were to find their attention riveted on a vaster sensation which involved the social, political, racial, national and dynastic interests of the British Empire.

II. I will not raise the vexed question as to whether England did or did not go mad at the time of the Boer War. It is sufficient to realize that if it was madness, it was the madness of puberty, the vague opening consciousness of a nation emerging from a chrysalis condition, or from a condition at least in which only the aristocracy had fully lived, in which the middle-class lived between sleeping and waking, and the mass of the nation was somnambulist. But in the 'nineties the mass was beginning to awake. The millions of the sub-

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merged—the intellectually submerged—were beginning to raise their heads above the surface, to express vaguely and incoherently the new passion to join in the life of the nation—or rather to make the nation exist, for the first time, as a *whole* nation, alive in all its members, from top to bottom—to get rid of the old paralysis, to make the blood circulate through every vein of the organism. Such a feeling as this could not confine itself to a single class, but was bound to react upon the whole nation. The first opportunity would be seized to let off the steam of violent emotion generated by the new collective sense of the crowd. A new, half-formed sense of fellowship, the primitive *tribe* or *team* lust, was the spirit which drove the nation into a war.

The three men who emerged, transcendent figure-heads at the end of the century, owe their prominence to the fact that they gave expression to this violent, awakening, transition period. They were Joseph Chamberlain, Rudyard Kipling, and Alfred Harmsworth, of whom one only, the last, steered his ship safely beyond the transition period, and adjusted his sails to a steadier wind.

The first two were essentially moved by this spirit of the *team*; both of them, probably without understanding the impulse that moved them, began to give expression loudly, and in popular terms, to the desire of the masses to enter into the life of the nation, and to assert this life of the new organism

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in some violent, physical way. It was significant that Mr. Kipling should on the one hand be extolling "Tommy Atkins," the military representative of the masses, and on the other clamour for the assertion of the team—the nation, the race, the Empire—against all the world.

And Mr. Chamberlain in the same way felt this new youth of the nation—the nation which was renewing itself by the incorporation of the majority—crying out for some collective assertion of its existence. It was this impulse which made him fear the apparently separatist movement for Irish Home Rule; it made him, democrat or demagogue, urge men to "think imperially"; and it led him to steer British policy towards the "inevitable" war—a war which was inevitable, but not in the sense he intended.

It must not be supposed that the controllers of the *Daily Mail* set out in a deliberate way to foment this war. They existed to provide daily excitement for the crowd, and the crowd as it happened was in the mood for some more significant sensation than that occasioned by a multitude of meaningless trifles. Now, for the first time since journalism had penetrated to the masses, a national, communal sensation appeared, violent enough, exciting enough, to dominate attention, to fix it, for the moment at least, upon the widest public issues. The *Daily Mail* seized the occasion. It ceased to be a daily *Answers*. It responded to the desire of the crowd,

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and became the first popular, and at the same time national paper.

The Boer War did for the *Daily Mail* what the Napoleonic wars did for *The Times*. These wars afforded profoundly interesting and exciting public events, news of which was needed by the different clientèles to which these papers appealed. Just as the religious wars in Germany occasioned the earliest regular news-pamphlets, or *Corantos*, just as the Napoleonic wars favoured *The Times*, and the War of the Rebellion in America led to the popularization of newspapers in the States, so the Boer War ushered in the new epoch of the half-penny daily Press. It was not only that that war engendered the popular excitement favourable to the foundation of a popular paper ; it was the readiness of the populace to feel excitement, their growing desire for a great national sensation, which was the ultimate cause both of the war and of the popular Press.

III. The *Daily Mail*, like *The Times* a century earlier, led the way in adopting every device which made for speed and business efficiency. It must be remembered that in fixing its price at a half-penny it required a prodigious circulation if it was to be made to pay. It soon had a new rival in the *Daily Express*, and in the provinces many of the old penny papers reduced their price, a course afterwards followed by the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily News* in London. The first essential for

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the booming of a half-penny paper is to make a striking impression, and in time of war especially an impression is made not only by sensational news but by the *first* news. The *Daily Mail* recognized that cheese-paring economy is ruinous to a newspaper, which literally lives upon its reputation. It spent money lavishly in sending correspondents to the front and in the use of cables. It installed the best machinery adapted from American models. The office was organized with a view to speed and routine efficiency as the best offices are organized in New York and Chicago. The time of going to press was put forward, and this was no disadvantage to the *Mail* as it was to its more ponderous rivals, for it was little concerned with literary articles based on the news, but only with the news itself, which could be printed off as it arrived. In due course it began to run special trains of its own, and initiated the practice of printing an edition in Manchester, in an office connected by a special wire with London, a French edition in Paris, and various local editions in different parts of England. I will not here discuss its advertisement department, or the method of dealing with the staff; but for the moment it is sufficient to emphasize the fact that the *Daily Mail* made good its existence as a popular newspaper by an organization more alive, more elastic, more adjustable than that of any other paper out of America, and not to be excelled there. And it easily retains this supremacy to-day.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE VOICE AND THE AUDIENCE.

WE are now in the midst of a period of critical change—a revolutionary period. In its quietest times the Press is always evolving and transforming itself; but evolution becomes revolution when all that belongs to the established order is threatened with disaster, when new types spring up suddenly and exterminate the old. In both England and America the revolution resolves itself into three distinct phases. The first is that of the arrival of the violent popular Press, causing a fluttering in all the dovecots of newspaper-land, creating new tastes, destroying old standards, undermining established reputations. In the second phase the disturbance has its manifest effects upon the old-established journals. If they are content to retain the same class of readers as they had before, they make certain concessions according to the supposed change in those readers themselves, introducing greater variety, more vivacity, and falling in with the universal modern demand for impressionism and the “personal note.” If, on the other hand, panic-stricken at the increasing disproportion be-

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tween expenditure and revenue, they stretch out gropingly to find new readers, they are prone to concede point after point in blind imitation of the popular journals, grovelling on their knees before a populace which they do not understand, confessing their good intentions and their errors, and in some cases have been known to out-Herod Herod in a shrieking attempt to be more popular than the popular Press.

The third phase has only begun. Its consequences lie in the future. Just when the aforetime reputable Press has learnt the lesson of indecency, the controllers of the popular Press have learnt the market-value of decency. They have discovered that accurate information pays; that an irresponsible sensational manner no longer makes a sensation; that news must be news; that authority is still authoritative—that the largest newspaper audience in the world is not destitute of common-sense. This is the amazing discovery which has recently been dawning upon the world; and it emanated, not from “respectable” England, which had discarded the idea, but from the Press which had once been called the “Yellow Press.”

And here for a moment we must pause to consider certain general questions which thrust themselves upon our attention. We see not only that the “Press” is constantly changing, altering its character, its tone, its type, but that at any given moment it is infinitely various in its manifestations.

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I take leave to emphasize again a fact to which I have already alluded.<sup>1</sup> The Press is no single, composite institution or organization like the Monarchy, the Church, the House of Commons, or the Stock Exchange. It may at certain times be captured by special interests, just as we have seen that the mediaeval Church monopolized many of the powers which correspond to-day to the powers of the Press. It is sometimes convenient to speak of the "Fourth Estate." But the term is misleading. There are certain functions performed by certain journalists which may properly be called the functions of a Fourth Estate. That is to say, we might name a number of representative journalists in England, America, or any popularly governed country who, by reason of their influence with the public and their power of organizing popular opinion, exercise a direct influence upon Government circles no less than upon Government-making circles. Nevertheless, these powerful journalists are not the Press. They are indeed only a small part of it. Their very influence is due to the fact that the function of the Press is something infinitely wider than *their* function.

We must keep constantly in mind the fact that the Press, in its simplest aspect, is primarily a machine, or instrument. It is a device of civilization, firstly, for extending the area of the human voice, so that thousands or millions of people in

<sup>1</sup> Chapter iv.

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different places may attend to the same words, and secondly, for registering words, for making them more lasting than the single pronouncement of the human voice. Considered in this aspect, it is a device for getting words transmitted to a machine, from a machine to many pieces of paper, and for the distribution of these pieces of paper to the general public. It has reached a high stage of development collaterally with the development of manufactured goods, such as paper, with the development of machinery, railway enterprise, and telegraphs, telephones, etc. But it should be observed that it is actually and literally the basis upon which all the rest of modern civilization depends. The science of the world is enshrined in printed books, and without these books it would be impossible to equip a sufficient number of students with the minimum of information necessary for the continued working of factories and machines. The efficiency of railways would be destroyed without the multiplied copies of railway time-tables, and the use of the telephone implies the use of the telephone directory. Many of the greatest retail shops in the world do most of their business through printed catalogues and price-lists. It would be easy to multiply instances to show not only that most of the business enterprise of the world would be paralysed by the suppression of print, but that the world relies at every moment upon the accuracy of this information, and is not deceived. The

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prices of stocks and shares quoted in the newspaper lists are, barring misprints, exactly those which are quoted on the Stock Exchange. If you see a play advertised for a certain hour at a certain theatre, no one for a moment suspects the journalist or the advertiser. He knows that it is at that theatre and no other that the manager intends to produce his play, that it is at that hour and no other that he proposes to send up the curtain. When you see an announcement that a cricket or base-ball match is to be played on a certain ground, you may confidently make your arrangements for seeing it; and when you see that one side or the other has won by so much, you do not question the report. The hours of sunset, sunrise and high-water are accurately recorded, and a ship's pilot may stake the safety of his ship on the information. If you look through "Situations Wanted" in a newspaper, journalistic caprice is not suspected of converting the eligible housemaid into a footman.

It is evident that the whole business organization of the modern world depends upon the accuracy of certain information given in printed words. We all rely upon it for many of the most ordinary necessities of life. The whole organization of the modern State, on its purely material side, is based upon the calculation that a certain kind of information given by the Press is unfailingly correct. The vastly complicated mechanism of the modern world depends upon a similarly complicated system of

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words multiplied by print. To a considerable extent this necessary, routine information is supplied by daily and weekly periodicals, and there is no "rag" so disreputable that we may not give complete credence to certain news which it habitually provides.

Here, then, is a necessary function fulfilled by the Press which puts it on a par with the postal service or the railway system—a function which is fulfilled more or less mechanically, the non-fulfilment of which would disorganize society as completely as an effective general strike. The speeding up in the collection of news, the perfecting of printing machinery, and the rapid distribution of newspapers, have all contributed—so far as this routine and accurate news is concerned—to industrial efficiency, to labour-saving in every kind of activity. On its merely routine side the Press has linked the heterogeneous modern State into a complex organism, each part depending on all the others.

But when we come to the more debatable elements in printed literature, the question of supply and demand, complicated in any case, becomes more complicated still. All journalism and all literature imply a voice at one end and an audience at the other. But that is not all. The voice may be that of a man who wishes to utter only what an audience may be glad to hear, or it may be that of a man who wants to compel an audience to

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hear words of a certain kind, words unwelcome as well as welcome. That is one of the differences between commercial journalism and disinterested journalism. But not only may there be infinite differences in the voices; the audiences are equally various. And the larger the whole potential audience is, the more difficult is it for a certain kind of voice to find the right audience. This is particularly evident in the case of books by new writers. In the days when comparatively few books were published, and the reading public was small, every published work was likely to be heard of by those who would be most interested in it. To-day the number of books published is so large, and the total number of readers so incalculable, that a book published by an unknown writer has but a small chance of finding its way to a tithe of that audience, scattered amongst the mass, who would be interested in it if they only knew about it.

And to a less extent the same thing is true in journalism. It has this advantage over a book, that its effect being repeated over and over again, it tends in time to penetrate through the mass, and to find its way to the circle of readers who want the information it provides, or who like the ideas which it is in the habit of expressing. But here it must be observed that there comes in a new element which will have to be considered later—the *business interest*. No new journalistic effort can be again and again repeated—unless by some lucky

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chance it instantly lights upon its public—without the substantial backing of capital. And as a rule it cannot reach its proper public unless the business interest continually intervenes, and puts it effectively upon the market. In this respect journalism is often hampered and warped by the intervention of an alien element—a business interest which intrudes itself upon editorial control and often defeats its own end.

Thus in the complexity of the journalistic scheme, with its multitude of writers and their vast unclassified audiences, there is much ill-adjustment, much waste. Nevertheless, the Press, in parts and as a whole, is tending at every moment to adjust itself to its ever-changing world, and viewed in the mass we may see it as an intricate pattern running right through the State, arranging it in its own mysterious way into groups. There is probably no artificial classification of a modern community which could discover the various groups of individuals within it so perfectly as they are discovered by the natural selection of the Press.

Society is grouped by the Press in many ways. It divides it by strange untraceable lines into communities of individuals who "take in" a particular daily paper; and each of those communities, the "following" of a particular newspaper, may be again subdivided according to the particular feature or features within the paper which have induced the subscriber to take it in. And so with every

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other journal of any kind whatsoever, daily, weekly, or monthly, the group of persons who take it in, regularly or occasionally, is a special assortment of the nation—assorted in respect of some particular common interest, sympathy, or need. The editor addresses a special scattered audience which in a certain sense he has himself chosen, which in any case has chosen him.

But journalism not only groups society—in groups the individuals of which are so hard to trace—but it also promotes social action by presenting the information or opinion which is the necessary basis of action. It serves to link together the members of each group, and enables them to co-operate. There are, for example, several journals devoted to the interests of motorists. The quality of the news provided and the manner in which it is presented, added to the way in which it is “pushed” and a large element of accident, will give one of these papers an advantage over another; and the division of the motoring public between them will in itself represent a sub-grouping of this comparatively small class. It is evident that the advertisement columns alone in these journals are the means of bringing together those who wish to buy and sell, let and hire. The news which they provide sends people to race meetings, enables them to choose and avoid roads and countries, and helps them to co-operate for mutual protection and aggression.

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A still better instance may be found in the fashion journals for women. It is not difficult to trace these papers to that special but prodigious circle of readers for whom they cater, though it would probably be impossible to trace the separate sub-groups to which each particular journal appeals. To this large branch of the public Press it is only fair to add those illustrated trade catalogues which are circulated by all the large drapers and millinery firms. These catalogues are paid for by the increased prices of dresses, stockings, hats, etc. The effect of this powerful department of journalism is little short of miraculous. A fashion is started in Paris, and within a few weeks the ladies of Detroit, Buenos Ayres, Calcutta and Brixton have adopted it. Such is the influence of the women's Press that at any given moment all the ladies all over the world are thinking of the same sort of hats and the same sort of gowns, and, if they have the means, wearing them.

Or if we would take the case of journals which aim at a very special "group" within the State, I might mention those which are conducted by the Syndicalists in England and the Independent Workers of the World in America. The organ of syndicalism in America is careful to enunciate principles rather than to prescribe a precise course of action; but "Direct Action" is its motto. Those who would understand how such a journal may contribute to "direct action" should read Mr. Arnold Bennett's book on the United States.

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All successful journalism is based upon the principle of repetition. The function of a newspaper is to express repeatedly, not the same facts, but the same sort of facts; not the same ideas, but ideas based upon the same outlook upon life or a department of life. Every journal which lives acquires a kind of personality, which may be that of the institution, or that of an individual within the institution. There are periodicals, of course, the reputation of which depends upon their variety; but the character is none the less there, versatile it may be, or slipshod, but recognizable; and if it is not recognizable, the paper must fail—for it will not find its way to that group within the public whose support it requires.

Modern journalists have fully realized that it lies in their power to create new groups, or, as they call it, to create a "public." The founders of *Tit-Bits* and *Answers* saw the possibility of attracting to themselves portions of the public that had never before been exposed to the assaults of journalism. The editor of *John Bull* discovered a public which was interested in a wholly unconventional view of public affairs on the personal and often scandalous side. The great American magazines sifted the whole of the States and found a public which in any one region had been too small to attract the local newspaper, but in the aggregate was far larger than that to which any single newspaper appealed. But in the days when the upper

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and middle classes were the chief readers of papers—that is to say, in the days before the unclassified and almost unknown modern audiences were brought into the reading circle—the obvious tendency of all journalism was to adjust itself to existing and well-known groups. Politics, especially in England, but also to a considerable extent in the United States, provided the ready-made dividing lines ; and these still indicate the boundaries of most intellectual journals. Such a newspaper, for example, as the *Westminster Gazette* has a very special, educated public of its own. There are some readers who are particularly attracted to it by the cartoons of Sir Francis C. Gould ; others by its highly ingenious Saturday page ; others, perhaps, by the considerable space which it devotes to the reviewing of books. But it is the leading article on the first page which gives the paper its distinctive note. I have heard journalists condemn the *Westminster Gazette* because it does not adopt the modern custom of putting the news on the first page and its leading article elsewhere. As a commercial device for introducing the paper to a new and different public this might be successful ; but it would also imply loss of character. The *Westminster Gazette* is mainly read by those who expect to find in that daily editorial article an expression of official Liberalism. It is scarcely an exaggeration to call its editor an unofficial member of the Liberal Cabinet. In this leading article Mr.

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Spender presents just such a case as a Cabinet Minister might be expected to state; and sometimes as much may be learnt by reading between the lines, by noticing his judicious suppressions, as by his openly expressed views. It is not that he has always been informed, in so many words, as to the exact facts of a case, but so closely is he in touch with the Foreign Secretary and other members of the Cabinet, that he knows their views and can interpret their actions, and he jealously guards their policy and their secrets. The public which is interested in the dexterous interpretation, day by day, of official Liberalism, is the public which is faithful to the *Westminster Gazette*.

In the United States, too, we might name journals whose special public, in each case, consists of the supporters—or critics—of an official political party. The New York *Outlook* is the official organ of Progressive Republicanism. Not only is Mr. Roosevelt a regular contributor, but he is on the editorial staff, and whenever he is in New York attends the editorial lunches and discusses editorial policy. Until recently *Harper's Weekly*, under the control of Colonel Harvey, might have been regarded as the mouthpiece of the Progressive Democratic party and of President Wilson. It was Colonel Harvey who brought forward Mr. Woodrow Wilson as a prospective candidate for the Presidency, who pushed his claims in *Harper's Weekly*, and did perhaps more than any other man

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—certainly more than any other writer—to secure his election. But Colonel Harvey is not the type of journalist who is constitutionally disposed to be the mouthpiece of a President or a party. He has recently sold *Harper's Weekly*, and it will be interesting to see if the group of readers who followed his weekly pronouncements will turn their allegiance to the very different journal in which he will henceforward air his views—the *North American Review*.

But London journalism is far more profoundly wedded to the political groups than is American journalism, and this for the simple reason that Englishmen are more interested in politics than Americans. Many of the most remarkable personalities in London journalism derive their support not only from their journalistic talents, but from the fact that they are known to have personal influence in high political circles. Mr. Garvin, of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, is a dreaded influence in Tory circles; he rules by terror inspired no less by his zestful personality than by the influence of his energetic, impetuous pen. Mr. St. Loe Strachey, of the *Spectator*, is the watch-dog of Tory traditions—he will pardon the expression—and has been as ready to drive away Protectionist invaders of the fold as he is to defend the accepted principles of Toryism and the Church. When Mr. Massingham took over the editorship of the London *Nation* it was expected that his journal would become the inspired organ of the left wing of the Radical party.

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Indeed, it has often received the direct countenance of Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Lloyd George, both of whom, and especially Mr. George, have owed much, in the early stages of their careers, to Mr. Massingham, just as President Wilson owes much to Colonel Harvey. But the editor of the *Nation* is not the kind of journalist who is easily "inspired" by authority. The paper has been notable for criticizing its own party, and even its own wing of the party, scarcely less severely than it has criticized the Opposition. It has consistently adhered to certain definite principles of Radicalism, whether these have been observed by Radical Ministers or not, and it has in consequence obtained the admiration rather than the love of anaemic party politicians. Thus it is scarcely one of those papers which have commended themselves to an existing group of readers defined by party politics. It has rather had to create its own circle, a result which it has accomplished more easily than it might have done owing to the unity of thought, feeling, tone which pervades the paper—in its politics, its general articles, and its critiques of literature, drama and art.

The journalism addressed only to the fairly well-educated classes lends itself to an analysis which it is far harder to apply to the popular Press. For a century or more the periodical Press has been experimenting upon the middle classes, discovering or failing to discover their tastes and prejudices, their

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various groupings—organizing readers by its own selective process, one journal failing when it found no responsive group, another stepping in and discovering a new group hitherto unsupplied. By this process of natural selection it has come to pass that all, or nearly all, the interests of the middle classes have found some sort of regular expression through journalism.

This is what I mean by saying that the nation, or a part of the nation, is in process of becoming articulate. I do not mean that it is proceeding towards a condition under which every man can make his individual voice heard ; but that in so far as man is a social animal, and can have views, tastes, feelings in common with other men, to that extent, and so far as matters of common interest are concerned, every man, in an articulate State, will find his general views, tastes, feelings somewhere expressed, and perhaps much better expressed than he could himself express them, and with much more reason ; that he will find himself united, through the link of journalism, to all who are of like mind with him. Every journal is like a wire carrying a psychological current which winds its way intricately across and through the country, and it is continually crossed and recrossed by thousands of other wires. I do not say that a condition of perfect articulation will or could ever be realized. There can be no perfectly consistent editor, no journal which supplies exactly what is

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needed ; there must always be many gaps unfilled, many redundancies which survive their use, many second-best's which are accepted for lack of the best. Nevertheless, I think I am justified in saying that so far as the upper and middle classes are concerned, the middle-Victorian Press did fairly well represent the various groups into which those upper and middle classes could be divided, in respect of their various social interests — that it penetrated to these groups by a process of natural selection—that it tended to promote a sort of group consciousness and to promote group activities.

But within twenty years after the Education Act of 1870 millions of new readers had been added to the nation. Two new difficulties were instantly added to journalism and to literature. The larger the circle of readers, the harder it is for the right printed matter to find its way to the right reader. And secondly, these added millions were an unknown quantity ; they had not been the objective of journalistic experiment ; they were unclassified, unorganized ; they presented a vast *terra incognita* to the publicist. How were they, according to their own strange, incalculable nature, to be grouped ; and if they could be grouped, and the journals suited for them could be carried to their respective circles of readers, how was it not to be expected that crowds so unaccustomed to the impact of literature would not quickly change under

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its influence, and undergo new, more complex groupings?

Hence the vast uncertainty introduced into journalism when first it went out to cater for the masses, an uncertainty which became all the more marked when many of the old papers, unable to maintain themselves upon their small select groups, sought to widen their range, and were confronted with the peril of the unknown. Here there was little to guide the journalist. The field was large, and at first but little exploited. A bold instinct for the language and feeling of the people might carry him to a big success. But the finer shades of thought, feeling, requirement in the masses have scarcely yet been experimented on by those who hold in thin hands the threads of popular journalism. The most apparent element, the largest, commonest and coarsest tastes, were those which sprang most instantly into view. It was for these that journalists catered first. And other caterers blindly followed, not having the sense to see that the great public was various, and might develop unsuspected tastes—tastes which would never be satisfied by the bloodless demagogism of conventional philanthropy, or old-fashioned journalism debased to new purposes.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE FRANKLY COMMERCIAL PRESS.

OBSTACLES to free thought and speech are no sooner cleared away than others grow up like weeds to take their place. Men are no longer forbidden to think as they choose, but the material for belief is now presented in a form confusing and shattering to belief. The geographical obstacle of distance no longer checks the distribution of news; but the machinery and railways which have diminished the friction have brought in the element of capital, and imposed a new condition upon the diffusion of ideas. We have seen that at all times vested interests crop up seeking to monopolize the free air of knowledge, and the power to deal in knowledge, stifling the national instinct towards inter-communication of ideas — towards national self-consciousness. The progress of democracy is a progressive fight against monopolized knowledge, and as soon as the vested interest has been broken down in one form it has to be fought again in another.

To-day it is the moneyed interest which has stepped in, developed to monstrous proportions, and

wound itself about the vitals of the Press, monopolizing the machinery of knowledge. No great London newspaper could be founded to-day without a capital of a quarter of a million pounds, and in America anything from a million to five million dollars may be spent in building up a newspaper connexion. The smallest weekly or monthly journal can scarcely hope to succeed without considerable capital, and even in the case of journals which have succeeded without initial outlay, it is obvious that from the moment they become successful they become "properties"; they can be bought and sold; the cash consideration may be ignored by a high-minded proprietor, but it is always there, a temptation to which he is exposed, occasionally by the would-be purchaser or investor, and every day by the advertiser.

It is impossible to form a true estimate of the modern Press without considering this basic condition of journalism—the financial interest. It is not too much to say that capital controls the doling out of knowledge to the masses almost as completely as the Roman Church controlled it seven hundred years ago. There are some who would say that the dogmas of capitalism are not less definite, not less all-embracing, and all-penetrating, than the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church; and that the capitalist depends no more on the good-will of consumers—the public—than Rome depended on the faith reposed in it by the masses. But this

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is the argument of fanaticism. Capital is only reserve power ; it is not in its nature a dogma. It is something which can be seized or stolen, and applied to any purpose, and for the propagation of any dogma, without altering its character as capital ; but when Henry VIII arrogated to himself the powers of the Church, the character of the Church was essentially changed. Capital may be employed by a socialistic trade union no less than by a strike-breaking federation of employers. It may be used by a Carnegie to promote free libraries, no less than by a railway company to hush up inquiry into an accident, and it is no less powerful when used by a Hearst on behalf of Socialism than when used by a Gordon Bennett to defend the *status quo*. The ranks of the great capitalists may embrace an almost infinite variety of temperaments and beliefs —in the newspaper world they may include a Hearst, a Bennett, a Pulitzer, an Astor, a Lawson, a Northcliffe, a Mond, a Lloyd, or a Cadbury.

But we cannot ignore this fact, that capital confers on the newspaper owner an opinion-making power which he has not derived from the power of his opinions, but from a wholly different source. In this respect it makes no difference whether the newspaper owner is sincere or not ; he exercises a power in respect of opinion which he does not derive from the power of his opinions—and this is where he differs from the journalist as journalist. Mr. George Cadbury, for example, is

unquestionably sincere in his Liberalism and his Puritanism ; but he derived his power of promoting Liberal Puritanism, not from his Puritanism, but from his capacity for manufacturing pure cocoa. Sir Alfred Mond is an absolutely sincere Liberal of a very different type, who is also a gifted politician ; but the capital with which he finances the Press is drawn from a business unconnected with his opinions. Lord Northcliffe, I am credibly informed, holds one personal, passionate conviction, a conviction based upon a genuine fear of Germany and the growth of Germany. He is able to promote this Teutophobe conviction by a power which he is said to derive from his skill in ignoring convictions. Capital is an essential condition of modern journalism, and yet it often carries with it intrusive, alien interests which conflict with the proper interests of the Press. Thus journalism is seldom entirely free. It is rarely allowed to follow just that course which the journalist, as journalist, would prescribe. It is dependent, not merely upon the capital of the capitalist, but upon his caprice. In any case, a highly capitalized journal is one which cannot be conducted exclusively with a view to producing the best journal, or even just that journal most suited to the public. It is bound also to be conducted with a view to the interests of capital, and that, as we shall see, is a very different thing.

The process of commercializing the Press, and

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making it subservient to the interests of capital, has been pre-eminently the work of recent years. I cannot do better than adduce the evidence of Mr. Robert Donald, editor of the London *Daily Chronicle*, who, as President of the Institute of Journalists, delivered a striking speech on the condition of daily journalism. I quote from the condensed newspaper report, which puts the case in a nutshell.

During the last twenty years . . . the Press had become commercialized. The proprietorial system had almost disappeared. Instead of individual ownership we had corporations, public and private. Nine-tenths of the leading newspapers belonged to limited companies, with "neither bodies to be kicked nor souls to be damned."

Twenty years ago the list of the London Stock Exchange did not contain a single newspaper corporation. Now, twelve large companies, representing many millions of capital, figured in the quotations. Many other companies were dealt with publicly in a more restricted market. Stock Exchange annuals contained a list of twenty-six newspaper limited liability companies, all of which, except one, had been registered during the last twenty years. When he said that the Press had become commercialized he did not wish it to be inferred that personal ownership was a combination of paternalism and philanthropy.

The private owner liked his profit, but as he had no responsibility towards shareholders he preferred less profit to compromise with principle. Under corporate ownership the main concern of shareholders was their dividend, and dividends must be earned even if principle had to suffer.

Mr. Donald is of course perfectly aware that

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most of these newspaper "corporations" are in a very few hands; that individuals or families are almost as prominent in the administration of the greater modern newspapers as in that of the Victorian newspapers. He has chosen a polite way of saying that to-day owners pay less attention to principle, and more attention to profits, than they did twenty years ago.

That is what he meant, and that is what is true. But why has this happened, and why, in particular, has it happened just in these last twenty years when newspapers have been cheapened and carried to the democracy? Is it because the very wish to present information to the crowd implies some strange wickedness, and that the democrat is more unprincipled than the oligarch? No; it was a simple question of supply and demand. Newspapers had already become great profit-making institutions after the middle of last century. Journalism, however "principled," was becoming a great branch of commerce. It needs no cynicism to perceive that in a matter of business the business man is likely to be quicker than the philanthropist; that when a vast new market was suddenly thrown open to the purveyors of literature the man of business would be the first to exploit it. In any case, it *was so*; the business man *was* quicker than the philanthropist in seizing the chance to sell literature to the crowd.

There were at least three other causes which con-

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tributed to the frank commercialism of the popular Press.

It seemed necessary that the cheapening of papers should be accompanied by a lowering of the standard. It was difficult at first to believe that the half-penny paper in England, the one-cent paper in America, could lend prestige to the man who would like to own a paper in order that he might take a pride in it. The cheap newspaper, with its distinctive popular note, was not likely to attract the political propagandist, or the man whose hobby was philanthropy.

Moreover, a popular half-penny paper, if it is put on a business basis, generally requires at least three or four times the circulation of a penny paper ; and therefore, *ceteris paribus*, it involves a bigger initial outlay and a larger turnover. It will require printing machines capable of producing three or four times the number of copies in the same time. As it lives upon advertisement revenue, not upon profits from sales, it will have to face a deficit until the advertisements have adjusted themselves to an enlarged circulation—a process which takes time. Printing three or four times as many copies as the dearer paper, it is confronted with a paper bill three or four times as big.<sup>1</sup> Machinery and distribution cost proportionately more. It is neces-

<sup>1</sup> It is true that the English half-penny papers consisted at first of only eight pages. Even so, the paper bill was large. Now they generally consist of ten or twelve pages.

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sary that it should be "boomed," and nothing is more costly than the process of booming. This not only involves the initial cost of advertisement, but the constant scoring of "scoops," or "beats." Large prices must be paid for early, sensational, or exclusive information, for it is only by calling attention to itself in this way that the popular paper can draw in its hundreds of thousands of readers. In fact, the foundation of a successful popular newspaper requires either an enormous capital, or an enormous business capacity for bluffing.

But the cause which most of all contributed to the commercialism of the cheap newspaper was its complete dependence upon the advertiser. Every additional copy printed involved additional loss, unless it brought in an additional advertisement return.

From the very first the popular newspaper was saddled with the incubus of capital. The very instrument which was ostensibly designed to give information to the many and provide them with the material for forming opinions and entering into the conscious life of the country was handled by men bound up with other interests, interests which favoured the suppression of some news, the distortion of other—which was as often as not in favour of the deception of the public. The popular commercial newspaper in England and America did not exist for the propagation of ideas ; it existed for

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the making of money. Its business was the sale of what was called news, but as profit was its only end, it was obviously willing to print false or misleading news whenever it was more profitable to do so. There was only one effective check to the dissemination of falsehoods in the purely commercial newspaper, the fear that continued distortion of the truth would in time be discovered and destroy its reputation with the public. Unfortunately there have been, and indeed there still are, in England no less than in America, journals with which this consideration weighs very little. The Press that is called the "Gutter Press" set out to capture majorities ; to force itself upon the attention only of the largest number in the crowd ; and it persuaded itself that the largest number was the most ignorant, the stupidest, the most "vulgar." Consequently it did not attempt to present day by day an orderly picture of the world's news, but to extract crude impressions from facts, to present facts in terms of sensation. And if it gave the most ignorant public what it really did want, it also tended to create and perpetuate a vicious taste. Just as publishers have created a widespread taste for inferior fiction and scandal books, so has a certain sort of paper created a public, a very large public, which reads it only for distraction, which does not demand ideas or care about exact evidence, which requires no more than a flavour in the written word as it requires salt with its mutton

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chop. Should an opinion be pronounced, it will not be weighed ; it will not sink in ; it must be repeated a hundred times before it will have an effect, and then it will be a subconscious effect. It is not for the clinching facts, for the solid material of judgment, that such a paper is read. It is not really read ; it is skimmed. The impression is not sufficiently sustained to create a conviction of fact ; attention is not sufficiently riveted to make judgment possible. Here there is but a flimsy basis for "public opinion." The paper from day to day presents a fleeting, ever-changing phantasmagoria, dimly corresponding to the pulpy surface of the mind for which it is manufactured.

In such cases a journal has little to lose if it is sometimes convicted of falsification. For it lives upon its capacity to provide a sensation, rather than upon the accuracy of its reports. On the other hand, if its reputation for accuracy is bad, if its judgments are not treated seriously, its capacity for doing harm, for misleading the public, is proportionately diminished. Many papers with immense circulations carry little political weight, and their recommendations of theatres, books, pictures, etc., do not influence the public.

The modern sensationalism of the newspaper Press not only began in America ; it was carried much further there, became much more general, and is now deeply fixed in habit. In many parts of the United States it would be difficult to purchase a

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daily paper not conforming to this frankly commercial type, popularized, sensationalized, extravagant. Even in these journals, as we have seen, there will be a big substratum of purely routine news, announcements that do not admit of error, that no one can possibly be interested in misrepresenting. For this information alone such papers may prove necessary to every citizen. And, indeed, there can be no newspaper in the world so extravagant, so fantastic, but that the greater part of its actual statements of fact must be true. Thus there is no paper which as a news vehicle is wholly discredited, even in the eyes of the most sober of citizens ; no paper which may not do some harm by falsifying or suppressing facts ; no paper which it may not be worth while to corrupt or "keep." The worst feature in American journalism is the fact that hundreds of newspapers are owned or supported by capitalists who have definite interests in other commercial concerns, and use their papers on behalf of these interests.

The interference of "big finance" in the conduct of papers is much more conspicuous in America than it is in England. Whilst political questions dominate public interest in Great Britain, financial questions bulk much larger in the public interests of Americans. Where a party of Englishmen would be found gossiping about the policy of the Government and the fate of Ministers, a party of Americans will more often be found discussing

Trusts, corporations, and the "men higher up." Finance and financiers, therefore, loom large in the newspapers of the States, just as politics and politicians occupy the central place in England. Nearly every English paper, even when it calls itself "independent," is attached to the cause of a political party. But most American papers, although they, too, profess allegiance to political parties, are far more closely attached to financial groups. Americans, therefore, are no more surprised at discovering financial bias in a newspaper than the Englishman is surprised at political bias. The latter has been accustomed to "coloured" news, news that reflects political prejudice; the "coloured" news of America often reflects financial interest.

Many extraordinary cases of the influence which vested interests exercise upon the Press have been brought to my attention by Americans, who were in a position to know. But it will be sufficient to mention one or two instances vouched for by Mr. Edward Alsworth Ross in his book *Changing America*. He speaks of one newspaper office where a list of sixteen public corporations was supplied to every member of the staff. The owner was "interested" in those corporations, and it was therefore forbidden to criticize them or to report anything which might be unfavourable to them. They were known in the office as "sacred cows." Mr. Ross also mentions the case of a prominent

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Philadelphia clothier who was found perverting youth in New York, and cut his throat. The Philadelphia papers suppressed the news, which only reached the city where the firm carried on business through extra editions of the New York papers. In the same city the business agent of the Elevator-starters' Union was beaten to death by a "strong-arm" man hired by a great business firm. Three newspaper men had authoritative news of the murder and promised to print it; but their reports were suppressed.

A still more startling story is told by Mr. Ross of the conduct of the newspapers during a street-car strike. He does not name the city, but I think I can personally confirm his account, for a precisely similar event occurred in a city where, during just such a street-car strike, I was myself staying. At the beginning of the struggle all the newspapers were disposed to sympathize with the strikers. But one day they simultaneously veered round to the other side, and were unanimous in supporting the employers. The big merchants had used their "influence."

It would be a great mistake to suppose that the English Press cannot be tampered with in the same way. I may mention a case where news came into an office relating to a transaction, not necessarily discreditable, but which might be thought to be discreditable, to a prominent person who was a large advertiser. The news was not referred to the pro-

prietors ; but the journalists who handled it knew that there would be a fuss if it was printed ; so it was suppressed. And again, during the great railway strike of 1911, few, if any, of the papers told what they all knew to be the truth about some of the railway companies—that though they were amply provided with coal they took advantage of the situation to hold up trains needlessly, thus saving expense on the one hand, and making profits out of the season-ticket holder on the other. Needless to say, the railway companies advertise in the newspapers.

But on the whole Great Britain has been free from what is known in America as the “kept” newspaper. I do not know of any case where a great paper has been deliberately acquired by a business man in order to make it subserve the cause of his business. When an English business man buys a newspaper or an interest in a newspaper it is generally from political or social motives, and not with a view to supporting commercial interests other than those of the journal itself. Even the frankly commercial English Press, though it may have no other object than that of making profits, has seldom had its interests directly identified with the interests of other business undertakings.

But if the English Press is comparatively free from the “kept” newspaper, there is no other American device for tampering with the honesty of the Press which is not also known east of the

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Atlantic. It is the insidious influence of the advertiser which has destroyed the freedom of journalism, and done more than anything else to degrade it.

This noxious influence is of comparatively recent growth, and it was the popular half-penny paper which made it general. We have seen that all through the Victorian era, and earlier, newspapers drew a large part of their revenue from advertisements. The great penny newspapers could not have existed without them. But in those days, when modern English industry was being built up, the trade advertisers needed the great newspapers at least as much as the newspapers needed them. They did not make a favour of buying advertisement space as they do to-day ; they needed that space, and could not always get it. The editor was responsible only to the proprietor, and the proprietor appreciated a successful editor when he found him. The latter therefore was supreme so far as the contents of his journal might be concerned. He was interested in politics, news, and what was taken to be "public opinion," and would not tolerate the intrusion of the business manager into the editorial sphere. It was understood that the first essential in a newspaper was that it should be properly and freely edited, and in a well-edited paper the business side could take care of itself. Thirty years ago the advertiser was a source of legitimate revenue ; he had not yet become a tyrant. That this happy state of affairs could not have con-

tinued is possible enough. In any case every new invention which made for the efficiency of journalism was tending to increase the cost of newspaper production. And when the great businesses settled down and became established institutions they did not advertise so extensively as in the earlier days when they were creating a connexion. Agents also were continually discovering new methods of publicity which took advertisements away from the newspapers. It is likely enough that some of the penny papers would in any case have been driven to sue for the favour of the advertiser ; and the suppliant tends to become a slave.

But whatever the fate of journalism might have been without the half-penny paper, it was the half-penny paper, with its frank commercialism, which broke down the independence of journalism, and brought it under the thumb of the advertiser. Such a paper involved enormous annual expenditure to which sales contributed comparatively little. Circulations were forced up, not to produce sale profits, but to increase the value of the advertisement columns. The whole conduct of the paper was based upon revenue from advertisements, and to that consideration every other was secondary. The newspaper is a legitimate medium of communication ; it is reasonable that the advertiser who is brought into touch with the public should pay his contribution to the expenses, and reduce the price at which the public is permitted to read. But in

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practice how does the system work out? In every newspaper office there are three main departments besides the printing department—the editorial, publishing, and advertisement departments. I am for the moment confining my attention to the purely commercial newspaper, to those managements which conduct newspapers quite frankly as business concerns, and with a view to profit. It is obvious that the dominant influence in this purely commercial office will belong to that department from which the greatest profits of the paper accrue—that is to say, the advertisement department. Every journalist knows that there are offices in London in which the editorial department has to play second fiddle to the advertisement department. It is not only that the amount of space available for news is dependent every day upon the number of advertisements which are to be inserted (that may reasonably be regarded as inevitable). But the news itself is censored in the interest of advertisers; and copy written up by advertisers, occupying space paid for at advertisement rates, is often inserted in such a manner that the public does not distinguish it from ordinary news. Still more insidious is the enormously growing practice by which advertisers make terms with the advertisement manager of a paper for the insertion of so many columns or half-columns of advertisements, on the explicit understanding that editorial "puffs" shall appear in another part of the paper on the same day. So

widely has this practice come to be accepted that even publishers of books have been encouraged to expect that if they advertise extensively in any given paper, they have a right to demand specially favourable treatment from reviewers. The only promise of escape from this wide-spread corruption is that it defeats its own ends. The public begins to lose confidence in statements of fact instigated by interested persons, or in opinions which they believe can be bought and sold. In some papers a criticism of motor cars or a review of a book would have no weight whatever with the very public interested in such matters, unless it bore the hall-mark of some well-known and trusted signature. In the long run even the advertisement revenue must suffer, for a paper which refuses to deal in ideas fails also to fix attention. In such a paper a constantly repeated advertisement may prove effective. If a vacuous mind is presented sufficiently often with the words X's pills, the name "X's pills" will stand out imaged on the brain like the recurrent episode of a nightmare ; and if a pill is required, the owner of that mind goes to a chemist's shop and purchases the little box which has been photographed on his somnambulistic intelligence. In such a paper it is profitable to advertise pills. But it is not profitable to advertise *ideas*. There were papers, the most widely circulating papers, in which the cry of "Tariff Reform" was repeated thousands of times. The upshot seems to have been that the casual

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reader had queer dreams, in which he was no more likely to see "Tariff Reform" as a beatific vision than as an inexpressibly horrible goblin. (See the Tariff Reform Press, 1906, 1910, 1911 *passim*. Result, Parliamentary majority for Free Trade.)

The disease would have run its course and worked itself out if it had infected only the frankly commercial Press. Unfortunately it was contagious. It broke out in many subtle and sinister forms. We must consider its effect upon what I may call the semi-commercial, or secretly commercial, Press.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE SECRETLY COMMERCIAL PRESS.

IT is an interesting but sometimes melancholy experience to talk about newspapers with some of the older journalists, men who have been in Fleet Street for twenty, thirty or forty years. What praising of past times, what denunciation of the present! What memories of days when managers spent money freely, and old retainers were at last pensioned into a comfortable senility! And to-day? The old retainers "sacked," the middle-aged men put upon their honour to sell their souls, or to go, the younger men trained according to the smart habit of the profession! It is of no avail to say, "My dear sir, this is exaggerated. Anyhow, your old journalism was dull, slow, conventional, divorced from the realities of life. You were coddled upon incompetence, hypocrisy, and lack of vitality. You were naturally doomed as soon as journalism woke up to the fact that there was a democracy, a real, living, shifting, changing, evolving mass of men and women seeking to be stirred by efforts which respectable men like you can never make." It is no use to say this, because, though it

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would be true, it would be only one side of the truth. Many journalists have had to learn that important, vital, "live" news in which the public would be interested may at any moment be crushed into inadequate space because the advertisement manager has unexpectedly arranged an extra page of advertisement matter; that at any moment he may find some interesting half-column of matter "gone" because it was necessary to make room for a "puff" promised to an advertiser; that the whole gearage of the paper may be arbitrarily upset for some reason connected solely with business considerations.

When I say this I am not thinking of the frankly commercial newspaper. I am thinking of other newspapers, which have old traditions, which have been respected, which in their old age have been set to learn the tricks practised by their younger competitors. They have been dragged into these conjuring tricks by force of circumstance. Their old popularity has gone. Smart competitors have set a pace with which they are making frantic efforts to keep up. They are trying to conceal their failure; to keep up the show of their old principles by secretly imitating the principles of others; at any cost, to make both ends meet.

It is, mainly, furious competition which has produced this lamentable spectacle. In the English provinces competition has not been so keen. New papers have been started, but not so recklessly as

in London. And it is for this reason that there exist to this day provincial papers in England and Scotland which maintain the Victorian standard as very few London papers maintain it, along with a vitality, a quickness, and a thoroughness which would put the Victorian paper to shame. The *Manchester Guardian* and the *Glasgow Herald* are not surpassed by any London penny paper; the *Birmingham Daily Post* and the *Yorkshire Post* maintain their prestige and their influence. I might mention many other British provincial newspapers which have maintained their high character and their incorruptibility, and this mainly because they have not been subjected, like the older Press of London and of American cities, to fierce competition with young and popular rivals.

In England it was not merely the Boer War which altered the character of journalism and destroyed the prestige of those papers which took the unpopular side. The *Manchester Guardian* took the unpopular side, but it maintained its circulation, its prestige, and its business connexions. Moreover, there were Conservative papers which suffered no less than Liberal papers, and precisely the same shifting of the balance was to be observed in America no less than in England. It was the arrival of the popular commercial newspaper, written for the crowd, that wrought havoc in the ranks of so many of the older papers.

Nor was it that the popular newspapers took

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readers away from the old papers. It is doubtful if they did. For the most part they discovered and exploited a new class of readers. It was rather that they quickened the whole pace of journalism. They insisted that news, whether important or unimportant, should be presented in a lively and vigorous manner. They spent money on getting early news, running early and special trains—they sent up the whole cost of newspaper production. But if they did not take away very many readers from the older papers, they did them no less an injury by taking away their advertisements. The half-penny paper, with its vast circulation, attracted the advertiser of popular wares, and the older paper, with its comparatively small circulation, began to languish from the failure of its advertisement revenue.

With an increased cost of production and a diminished advertisement revenue, many of the older papers found their circulation insufficient. They were losing money. The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Morning Post* still prospered; but a few years ago these and the Harmsworth papers were the only morning papers in London which were really showing a profit.<sup>1</sup> It was evident that under the new circumstances either there were too many papers, or the papers were wrongly conducted. Amongst evening papers the *Echo* and the *Sun*

<sup>1</sup> The *Daily Graphic* ought probably to be excepted, but that paper held a unique position, and belonged to a different category.

disappeared. The *Evening Standard* and the *St. James's Gazette* were amalgamated. The *Globe* changed hands. The *Pall Mall Gazette* has been put under Mr. Garvin, and the whole character of the paper altered. *The Times* went through a period of many vicissitudes, and its reputation was hardly enhanced by its connexion with a Book Club and an unfortunate edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Finally Lord Northcliffe acquired an interest in the paper ; the price was reduced to twopence ; and further developments are expected. An abortive attempt was made with the short-lived *Tribune* to revive an old-fashioned type of newspaper, which had most of the defects and few of the merits of the middle-Victorian Press. The *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily News* had already, in 1904, reduced their prices from a penny to a half-penny—the former being the first to decide on this course ; but the latter anticipated the other by a few days in actually adopting it. Finally in 1912 the *Daily News* and the *Morning Leader* were amalgamated, and the joint paper was then closely associated with the *Star*.

Almost the whole London daily Press has been in a condition of flutter and distress since the advent of such papers as the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, the *Mirror*, and the *Evening News*. Amongst morning papers only the *Daily Telegraph*, which had started with a character more popular

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than that of most penny papers, and the *Morning Post*, which succeeded in retaining its rather exclusive and wealthy connexion, seemed undisturbed by the storm. And amongst evening papers only the *Westminster Gazette*, which was regarded as an invaluable asset to the Liberal party, was enabled to pursue its course undismayed.

Mr. Robert Donald, in the address to which I have already alluded, suggests that there are too many newspapers, more, at any rate, than are likely to survive under modern conditions of production and competition—"the tendency [towards combination] will increase, and colossal circulations will continue to grow." That, indeed, is the present tendency, and surely a deplorable tendency. From a public point of view it is a small matter that the staff of one newspaper should be "thrown into the street" when it amalgamates with another; but it is not a small matter that the whole daily news of the world, that the whole daily expression of opinions about current events, should fall into fewer and fewer hands, should lose varied expression—individual forms of expression—and become to that extent less representative of the various interests of the community and its various opinions; that the Press should tend to become, not more free from the alien interests of capital, but more than ever enslaved to it; not more responsive to the *various* tastes of the community, but less so.

Mr. Donald may be right. There may be a

future for daily journalism even more lamentable than its condition to-day. Undoubtedly he is right if there is no alternative to the live commercial Press on the one hand and a dead-alive Press running in fixed grooves on the other. But I think most journalists will agree with me when I say that the journalists themselves are not wholly blameless. If many of the proprietors of the older papers, panic-stricken at the success of the new commercial Press, too readily abandoned themselves to a slavish imitation of the commercial practices of that Press, the journalists also, on their side, were willing merely to imitate the methods, practices and tone of their popular rivals. They may say they were forced to do so ; but collectively they were willing to do so ; they chose the line of least resistance ; they did not adopt any original line of their own, as alive as that of the new journalism, but different, suited not to a public which somebody else had already exploited, but to a public of their own.

I may be asked, what is this method which they might have adopted, in what spirit, precisely, ought they to have set to work to quicken their own papers in a live and original way ? My reply is that it was *their* business to discover such a way, not that of the critic to discover it for them—though I should be perfectly willing to map out a scheme if I were called upon to do so. As a matter of fact, ways were discovered so far as weekly journalism was concerned, and in the kindred activity of book-

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publishing. If they were seldom found for daily journalism, that is presumably because the average daily journal is a big institution, consisting of many people ; that conventions are powerful there ; that its traditions, old and recent, are difficult to touch ; that the imitative spirit is encouraged ; that the power of the editor is waning, and with him goes the power of originating ideas—for the business man, who is taking his place, is apt to apply the rule-of-thumb devices of commerce instead of the original devices of journalism.

Thus, when the older papers began to suffer from competition with the new papers, and a general panic set in among proprietors, managers, editors and journalists, there grew up among all of them one prevailing idea—that they could only right their position by imitating the methods of their successful rivals. Whilst the managers set out to attract advertisers by any and every allurement, and bade the journalists help them, the journalists themselves began to dress up their papers, according to the new conventions, in a style which they thought would win over the public. The whole Press of the country was destined to lose freedom, power, and prestige, both through the increasing influence of advertisement interests, and through the imitative, conventional, narrowly professional habit which tends to make all journalists follow blindly the initiator of the latest journalistic success. Many of the papers which started upon this imitative

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course had existed, and still professed to do so, for the promotion of certain political principles ; some of them were financially backed by men of unimpeachable earnestness and philanthropic reputation ; they were often edited by men of humane ideas. Such a paper was thrust into competition with its popular commercial rivals, and instead of offering a different article to the public, began to offer an article with which it was already supplied.

In the heart of its organization the observer may see dual motives, dual influences, an internecine conflict of irreconcilables, dividing the newspaper against itself. On the one hand it is fighting for its ideas, its politics, or its fads ; on the other hand it is fighting to survive as a commercial venture on an equality with its purely commercial rivals. The principled element within it is for ever at variance with the commercial, and it is ten to one that the commercial element will win the day. Even so, it will be hampered in the open market. It is not so clever at commerce as the frankly commercial paper ; in that line it is a second best popularizer, an imitator. It develops an *a priori* theory as to what the public wants ; a theory based upon the opinion, not of the public, but of other journalists. What one newspaper discusses must always be discussed by other newspapers. If one publishes an uninteresting, but exclusive, item of news, the others think they have lost a good "scoop," and

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probably get up an "interview" on the subject. It has frequently happened that one news editor has discarded certain information as unimportant, and the next day, dismayed at discovering that another journal has used it, has renounced his former judgment, raked up subsidiary facts, and with his sheep-like contemporaries entered the journalistic conspiracy to run an insignificant nine days' wonder. The interest was purely factitious. It existed only among journalists. But because one of them thought the subject worth booming, all the others felt bound to inflict the burden of it upon the public.

Now, the Press, which is only semi-commercial, is especially hampered by this imitativeness, by this habit of following the interests of the conventional journalists rather than the interests of the public. For being forced into competition with the wholly commercial Press it follows its lead in those matters which pertain to its commercialism. It begins to print advertisements in the form of news. It proceeds to gratify the advertiser by adding apparently harmless editorial praise of his wares. It even brings pressure to bear on its critics to give—"if possible" and "on the whole"—most attention to the books and productions of publishers and theatrical managers who are the best advertisers. In other words, a paper, the readers of which are not concerned with its principles and ideas, is held up as a model for another paper

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which without its claim to principles and ideas would not be read at all.

This strange misapprehension, inspired by managers who in some cases seek to combine philanthropic aspirations with crudely passionate commercial instincts, is responsible for the suicide recklessly permitted in London journalism. It is the initial failure of the imagination to perceive that the democracy has all the variety of the human race ; that it is not all of one complexion ; that the readers of the *Morning Argus* are not the same people as the readers of the *Morning Mercury*. For example : in the *Morning Argus* it may be impossible to persuade even a small minority of its public to pay attention to reviews of books ; but in the *Morning Mercury* there may be a considerable minority which demands reviews. For the *Morning Argus* it might be profitable to truckle to the purveyors of books who were unwise enough to advertise in its columns. For the *Morning Mercury* it would be mistaken policy as well as bad morals. The publishers of books, being human, will, of course, press for favourable reviews if a little pressure will produce them ; but in the long run they learn that it is profitable to advertise in a paper which has literary prestige and a reputation for fair judgment—in the paper which does not sell its soul for every five-guinea advertisement. I am acquainted with the circumstances of a journal which resisted such advances as publishers are

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generally encouraged to make. It endeavoured to review books solely according to their merits, and in four years the publishers' advertisements, already at a fairly high level, increased by about 50 per cent. There are circumstances under which even the common honesty of truth-telling may be made to pay.

It is this imitativeness on the part of journalists, this tendency of managers to accept a valuation of the public made by those who were only concerned with the stupidest part of it, that has precipitated the existing crisis in London journalism. Does anyone doubt that its condition is critical? Let the reader ask any one of his journalistic friends to go over the list of London daily papers, and he will find that nearly half of them exist upon a thoroughly unsound financial basis; or, if he excludes the half-penny evening papers, which mainly depend upon betting news, and those illustrated morning papers, which are only taken for their pictures, he will find that two-thirds of the daily journals are in this unsound position. It would be safe to say that about half of those engaged in writing for the London daily journals belong to institutions which only exist on the good-will of proprietors disposed to lose money every year; which continue only under the constant threat of dissolution; and in the vain effort to remedy this unsoundness are drawn into a sordid traffic disgusting to the souls of self-respecting persons. Those are

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the conditions under which the journalists of to-day work. That is to say, the very power which disseminates information and ideas throughout the whole country, which is accepted as a reflection of the corporate life and progressive development of the nation, which can overthrow Governments, and produce wars and revolutions, is itself at every moment of its existence on the edge of a precipice.

This failure of one half of the Press is due, as I maintain, to the prevalence of a false view about the great public—the view that it is all of one complexion. Which are the really successful papers? There are two which have come right through the period of journalistic change without considerably altering their character, which cater now as they have always catered, for respectable conventional citizens, or for rich, fashionable persons and those who wish to be thought rich and fashionable. Both have a sound “City” connexion. Both are stable, but not to be imitated. The other successful papers are those which I have described, which set out with frankly commercial objects to capture the million, and did in fact capture what I may call the appetitive class of the community. That class they can hold. None can handle it so skilfully, none can vie with it in satisfying its wants.

And what about the remaining half of the Press, which, in many cases, makes a show of principles, bids for popularity, and has been drawn into traffic

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with the accursed thing? It has made the mistake of aiming at the very public which only the completely Yellow Press can capture. I maintain that in so doing it has underestimated, insulted and alienated the public; it has lost golden opportunities. It has followed a false commercial instinct in despising the commercial value of decency. To return to the point already made—when every man and woman in the country grew up knowing how to read and write, it was inevitable that most of the newspapers should address themselves to the million. It was as right as it was inevitable that such newspapers should seek to establish themselves on a sound commercial basis. The pioneers succeeded. With perfect consistency they sought out the legendary stupid man in the street, who actually happened to exist and still exists; papers still thrive upon him. But he was not the whole of the multitude, he was only a part of it, and probably a dwindling part. In proof of this I turn again to the parallel of book publishing. The publishers of the "Everyman Library" have sold copies of the English classics literally by the million. Messrs. Nelson publish a series of modern books of a very high class, and each of these is issued in a first edition never containing less than 50,000 copies. "The Home University Library," an admirable set of books, written by experts, is meeting with an extraordinarily popular success. Messrs. Bell have been encouraged to revive their famous "Bohn

Library," and have had more than the success they anticipated. "Everyone's Library" has prospered. It would be easy to multiply instances. A dozen other publishers again and again issue standard works at a small price which is remunerative because tens of thousands of copies are sold.

Here, at least, we have a tangible result of elementary education, a result which the journalist cannot afford to ignore—hundreds of thousands of people reading standard English literature, eager for knowledge, groping after something which may widen their mental scope. The journalist, or the manager who controls the pens of journalists, thinks he can feed these people with the pap invented for the mental and moral idiots who are doubtless still abundant. In the manufacturing districts there is a great working-class public which reads and buys, and would certainly be willing to pay a penny or a half-penny for some other kind of newspaper than that which is offered. It is true the journalist must be prepared to address this various public with simplicity and vigour. He must give them news about the affairs in which all of them are interested, but he must also—and this is deliberately and very short-sightedly neglected by most journalists—give them news about the affairs in which only some of them are interested. His paper must be broad and catholic; but it may also be individual and personal. The public he addresses consists of men

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and women ; and there are men and women of all sorts. It is open to him to appeal exclusively to the appetitive side of human nature ; but if he ignores the sincere and idealistic side, he does so at his peril. There is no need to cringe to the advertiser ; vendors of goods will advertise in that paper which is respected by its readers, and therefore brings them the best returns. The journalist who will act upon the conviction that the public, even the great public, is not wholly stupid or despicable, has an unequalled opportunity.

For elementary education is still on its trial. It has not borne those Utopian results which were once expected. Democracy cannot become a real thing until education has been improved and freed from its dilution of humbug.

But there is one peculiarly significant fact which I should like to mention. If any popular paper in England has in some degree adopted this view that I am stating, and has already by its practice begun to express its belief in the growing intelligence of the crowd, it is—curiously enough—the *Daily Mail*. We all know that that paper has a larger circulation than any other daily paper in England or America ; that from the point of view of journalistic initiative and business organization it is probably not to be surpassed. Now, when such a paper as this begins to adopt a comparatively sober tone ; when it begins to present news in a more continuous form ; when, above all, it prints

every day a couple of long articles by eminent authorities on the immediate questions of the day—thus substituting a variety of signed articles for the old anonymous leading articles—we begin to feel that the hydra-headed public is evidently demanding respect, and that *on business grounds* it must receive respect. Assuredly I hold no brief for the *Daily Mail*, but it seems to me to be a fact of extraordinary significance that the most popular organ in England should be adopting a policy of decency from which some of its rivals are receding. All that was to be gained by sheer sensationalism it has gained, in the past. It is now discovering that something more than sensationalism is not only tolerated, but required. It is curious that it should have been left to the *Daily Mail* to teach us this lesson.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE NEW JOURNALIST.

A very good account of the American Press is to be found in *Making a Newspaper*, a book by Mr. John L. Given. After reading this book I came to the conclusion that Mr. Given knows all that it is possible to know about the manufacture of a modern American newspaper. He describes the functions and duties of editors, managing editors, business managers, city editors, telegraph editors, copy-readers, reporters. He takes us through the processes of composing, machining, distributing, etc. He tells the young reporter how he must learn to recognize good news when he comes upon it, by what devices he is likely to collect it, how he must write it up, how—in short—he must comport himself if he is to rise in his profession. He tells what salaries may be earned, what prizes are to be won, and describes the process which leads from reporting fires in a small town to controlling a great newspaper in New York.

Mr. Given's book is a mine of information, and I found much in it that interested me. But perhaps the most distinctive impression that I received

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from it was one that he had not particularly intended to create—I felt that his treatment presupposed a strange uniformity in newspaper journalism—that in spite of all the differences in scope, importance, and prosperity, all these newspapers of which he is speaking are of one general type, having similar ends, adopting similar methods, approaching the problem of news in the same spirit. It conjured up in the mind's eye a vision of hundreds and hundreds of American towns, scattered over those vast States, producing similar newspapers on similar lines — hundreds and hundreds of newspapers training and sending out their professional journalists to carry on essentially the same work with the greater metropolitan papers—thousands and thousands of journalists migrating from newspaper to newspaper with the stamp of Mr. Given's reporter on their foreheads.

Needless to say there are really very many kinds of newspapers in America. No one would speak of the New York *World*, or the *Herald*, or the *Times*, or the *Tribune* in the same way that he would speak of the New York *Journal*, the *Evening Mail*, and the *Evening Telegram*. The *Boston Transcript* and the *Boston Herald* are both "good papers," but they are very different. The Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* and the New York *Evening Post* are two of the best papers of their kind, but they have little in common. And yet in spite of differences, in spite of diversity in politics

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and emphasis, in spite of everything that may be taken into account in respect of substance, appearance, or reliability, I know no two American papers so unlike each other as the London *Times* and the London *Daily News and Leader*, or the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Express*, or the *Westminster Gazette* and the *Evening News*. There is no broad and unmistakable dividing line between the older American papers and the new. One may cater for a very much richer audience than another ; but this divergence does not seem to imply a vast difference in the *tastes* of readers. Journalists easily pass from one kind of paper to another. Editorial writers, reviewers, and writers of special articles may be chosen in a particular way for particular journals ; but the news-getters and those who control them—and after all the news-getters are far the most important people in an American paper—seem all to belong to one school, to observe the same conventions, to conform to the same tradition. They vary in talent ; but the kind of talent required from them is, broadly speaking, the same for all.

Changes in journalism inevitably produce a new type of journalist, and introduce new journalistic conventions. It should be remembered that the popularization of the Press began earlier in America than it did in England ; that the older papers have been gradually adjusting themselves to the tone and spirit of the latest comers ; that it is the popu-

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lar type which is in the ascendant. The habits, conventions, and what may be called traditions of the popular journalism are now general ; they have asserted themselves throughout the whole profession, and woe betide the journalist who ignores them. But surely, it will be said, there is no country which requires so much enterprise, initiative, and originality in its news-getters as the United States ; which depends so little upon convention. To which I reply that there is no country which has so completely reduced news-getting to a science, and none perhaps which has so completely defeated its own ends by so doing. Daily journalism has been treated in America as a branch of commerce, with this difference, that in no other branch of commerce would tried men so frequently be discharged and new men be "hired" to take their places.

Nevertheless, it will still be objected, the American journalist is anything but conventional. My reply is that the most tiresome thing in an American newspaper is its *monotony*; and that this monotony is due to the hide-bound attachment of the editors to those conventions which they have been taught to respect, the observance of which they exact from their reporters. Mr. Given himself is by no means emancipated. For example, he advises the young reporter to learn as early as possible to write up the news of yesterday in such a way that it may seem to be the news of to-day,

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to use the present tense wherever he can avoid the past. This is an unwritten law which tends to distort, confuse, and often make unintelligible half of the news paragraphs in every daily paper of the United States—with the possible exception of the *Boston Transcript*. How does this rather childish convention work out in practice? On 11 June, 1912, a reporter of the New York *Herald* interviewed the father of the Mexican President on the subject of the Mexican revolution. It is the revolution, presumably, that is the chief matter of interest. The reporter, being acquainted with the rules, is anxious to give the news of 12 June, the day on which his remarks will be published, though he is actually writing on 11 June. This is the result:—

Señor Don Francisco I. Madero, father of the President of Mexico, accompanied by several members of his family, *is at the Hotel Belmont*. In a statement given out last evening he asserted that the backbone of the revolution. . . .

The italics are mine. So anxious is the reporter to be ahead of the news that he gives more prominence to the fact that an old gentleman is staying at a hotel than he does to the suppression of a revolution.

Instances of this trick of substituting an interest of to-day for an interest of yesterday—a trick that would not deceive a schoolboy—might be multiplied indefinitely. Take this from the *Sun*:—

Town Clerk Thomas O'Connell could not change a \$100 bill yesterday, so Shane Leslie, son of Col. and Mrs. John

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Leslie of Castle Leslie, Ireland, *owes him \$1* for the licence he issued yesterday to Leslie to wed Miss Marjorie Ide, a daughter of Henry C. Ide, United States Minister to Spain.

Or this from the *World*:—

Though he tumbled fifty feet with a heavy truck load of sand and a team of horses yesterday, Adam Mikar of Passaic, N.J., *is alive to tell the tale*.

That is distinctly better, distinctly more graphic, and it makes us hope that Mr. Mikar is still telling the tale. But even here the reporter has given away his *dénouement*; anything that follows will be an anti-climax. If his business is merely the telling of a sensational story—and it evidently is—he would have done better to raise expectation in his first sentence, and satisfy it in his last. This particular convention has not yet been adopted by English reporters. Contrast the sentence just quoted with the opening sentence of a report from the London *Daily Chronicle*:—

An extraordinary story of the mysterious disappearance of a trade union leader was told yesterday by Mr. Percy Young, general secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Hotel, Club, and Restaurant Workers.

There, in the first sentence, expectation is aroused, but the interest is not given away, and it is only in the last paragraph that we come to a sensational *dénouement*:—

Mr. Young adds that the belief is entertained that “the arrest” was effected by capitalist emissaries posing as detectives and using a bogus warrant.

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This is not a more sensational, but a far more effective newspaper story, which would have lost its cumulative effect under the conventional treatment of the American reporter. I will quote one more example illustrating the American rule that the whole story must if possible be epitomized in the opening sentence :—

Mrs. Milton Siegfried of West Front Street had one ear partly blown off and suffered serious cuts and bruises about the head, face and hands to-day in an explosion that wrecked the kitchen.

The only interest in this story lies in its horror. But the horror is entirely exhausted before the story is half told. After this first sentence it is impossible to add a word which can increase or maintain the sensational interest. From the point of view of the most popular and sensational journalism such a method of narration—a deliberate method—is artless, and defeats its own ends.

All this may seem to be very unimportant and trivial, and to be touching only a small matter of technique. But when trivial matters give rise to universal rules they cease to be trivial ; and they are here important at least to this extent, that they show the journalist suffering under the hampering conventions of his up-to-dateness. The observance of them is not only required as an evidence of smartness and experience ; it not only produces monotony of manner in a newspaper ; it produces also monotony of subject-matter. The reporter is sent out to inquire into a case, not so much to col-

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lect the gist of it, the central truth of the matter, but its sensational aspects—and men who are thinking in terms of sensation are apt to give attention to the same kinds of sensation. Hence the monotone of unrelieved horror, excitement, and surprise robbed of its surprise. The matter as well as the manner is all of one kind. The facts which present themselves to the journalist as the subject of "live news" are not necessarily those about which the public naturally wants to hear, but those which he has trained himself to look for, for which, to some extent, also, he may have created a taste.

No doubt a clever journalist will from time to time invent a new kind of surprise; but the system encourages him to discover it at the expense of *news*—he will produce a piece of impressionism which makes its effect almost in proportion as it is inadequate to the truth. I may take an instance in the career of an anonymous journalist, who is obviously high up in his profession, for he contributes six articles on "The Newspaper Game" to an organ no less influential than the *Saturday Evening Post*. In one of these articles he tells an amusing story of his treatment of a big political meeting in Canada. "I went down," he explains, "to look the meeting over, not that I was interested in Canadian politics or that my paper was, but I thought that I might get a story."

I got one, there is no doubt about that. The politics didn't appeal to me in the least, but the whiskers of the men at the

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meeting did. There were more kinds of whiskers worn at that meeting by the sturdy Canadian yeomanry than I had ever seen gathered together at one time. There were whiskers of every variety and of every colour, morasses of them, swamps of them, wood limits of them, acres of them. . . .

So I confined my story to the whiskers, mentioning incidentally in the last line that the display had been at some kind of political meeting. I took up the whiskers in detail and described them, apostrophized them, apotheosized them, laughed at them, admired them, stroked them and ruffled them. I was proud of that story, and they ran it on the first page. A day or two later a Canadian friend of mine, who read a good many Canadian papers in the course of his newspaper work, came in and said: "Well, you've raised merry hell with that whisker story of yours."

"What's happened?"

"Oh, nothing," he replied, pulling a bunch of newspaper clippings out of his pocket, "nothing at all, except that all the Canadian papers of the same political faith as the persons at that meeting are roasting the eternal tar out of you for insulting and vilifying their intelligent voters, and all the Opposition papers are quoting it and calling attention to the kind of rubes that make up that constituency."

No doubt the story was entertaining. His paper was not interested in Canadian politics, and at all times political meetings lend themselves to personal ridicule. But the system which encouraged this treatment of a political meeting is the same system which treats a "Titanic" disaster impressionistically, which beats up an agitation about the Panama Canal at a time when delicate diplomatic questions are in debate, which conceals

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political issues beneath personal issues at the approach of a Presidential Election.

I have found these articles in the *Saturday Evening Post* instructive in more ways than one. They show in a very clear light the conditions under which a journalist must work in a country where nearly all daily journalism has been commercialized. Some years ago there was a good deal of gossip in Fleet Street about the treatment of men on the staff of the new English popular papers. The complaint was that young men, employed perhaps at high salaries, had their "brains sucked" for a year or two, and were then discharged at a moment's notice, often worn out. Well, there was exaggeration in gossip such as this; and it would equally be an exaggeration to say that it represents the normal condition of employment in American journalism. There is, however, very little security of tenure for a Press-man in the States. He expects to get discharged for a single bad mistake. He does not complain of those editors or city-editors who, as a matter of settled policy, make a clean sweep of their staff at frequent intervals. He seldom protests against the conditions under which he has to work. On the contrary, he generally accepts them as a matter of course, as a part of the "game"; and these conditions encourage him to retaliate, to be a little "sharp," in his turn, at the expense of his employers. Here is an example of what is evidently

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regarded as a perfectly legitimate way of winning editorial praise. The author of "The Newspaper Game" was sent to criticize a play, and sat near to a "very prosperous and pleasant gentleman" who occupied one of the seats appropriated to his newspaper. He overheard this gentleman's conversation.

The man had a frank manner and used some very apt comparisons. Also he held the same views about the play that I did. Hence on my way back to the office I reasoned thus: That man undoubtedly is high up in the conduct of my paper. He held very decided views about that play. Those views coincide largely with mine. Where they do not coincide with mine his judgment probably is better than mine. So I'll let him criticize the play, as it is up to me to make good here as rapidly as possible.

Wherefore, instead of being a critic of that play I became a reporter, mostly, of another man's criticism, for I was terribly anxious to make a good impression with my first work and I considered that the end justified the means.

This writer would lead us to suppose that the purely "commercial" relations which exist between employer and journalist do not stop there; that they may exist equally between journalist and journalist. He mentions, *en passant*, how he secured the correspondence of a New York paper: "The man who had the job was leaving town and, in consideration of seventy-five dollars in hand paid, recommended me as the person best fitted to succeed him, and I was appointed."

After all, the influence of journalism does depend upon the journalist, and it is important that we

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should know what sort of man is making the Press of the world. I have discussed in previous chapters some of the influences which led the American journals to become demagogic in tone and frankly commercial in their organization and character. And we have now seen that the journalist also learnt to accommodate himself to the conditions imposed by the papers, and picked up something of the spirit and atmosphere of these institutions, tending to perpetuate that spirit and atmosphere by dint of the habits he learns, the conventions to which he becomes accustomed. Also the journalists and their newspapers have habituated the masses to a kind of newspaper from which only the higher average of education is beginning to wean them. I have alluded to the conventionalism both of the English and the American journalists, and I would respectfully suggest that just as the Englishmen are to some extent to blame for the conditions under which they work, so too the Americans are not wholly free from responsibility. They encourage their owners and editors in the illusion that the public is even cruder than it really is ; and this in spite of the admirable example that has been set them by the popular and profitable magazines, and by a few of the popular and profitable weeklies ; in spite of the ceaseless shower of criticism which is poured upon them by all leaders of American opinion outside the Press itself, and many within it.

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Meantime, the ranks of American journalism are being constantly recruited from the Universities; men of a high order of intelligence are entering the profession—men of culture, wide knowledge, and shrewd common sense. As a class the journalists of the United States are energetic and generous. In every way those whom I have met—and I have met a great many—are infinitely superior to the papers they produce; and there are some who know as well as anyone the defects to which I have alluded. The fact of the matter is that they are trained to do something which to many of them is not natural, congenial, or useful. One reason why some of them over-do the sensationalism is that they are deliberately writing with their tongues in their cheeks.

And it must be remembered that England has had to suffer from the American example. The popular half-penny Press of England began by taking the American Press as its model. The young journalists who lent themselves to its methods were encouraged to learn the American convention of smartness. Impressionism at first took the place of news. The young reporter discovered that he won more praise for writing a sensational paragraph than for producing an accurate report. A new convention, a new tradition even, began to assert itself. But it was not unaffected by the older influences, and there was one quality

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which the new journalists acquired no less than the old—an *esprit de corps* within the institution, a sentiment for the paper as a co-operative undertaking. Lord Northcliffe was too clever a man not to recognize the importance of this, a distinguishing trait of English journalists, and to relax accordingly that ruthless spirit in which Americans are disposed to employ and discharge their men.

The reader who would study the spirit in which a special reporter or descriptive writer on such a paper as the *Mail* sets out to "write up" incidents in a popular way might do worse than glance at a little book by Mr. Frank Dilnot, *The Adventures of a Newspaper Man*. The book is of no importance save as an illustration of the methods of such a journalist. We see in this particular case that it is his function to invest every affair that he reports with some sort of romantic interest; to make it as picturesque, as exciting, and as readable as possible. The journalist of this class is not always talking "with his tongue in his cheek." The men who succeed in this line are the men who really possess the faculty of becoming enthusiastic, or at least excited, about the events of everyday; who can renew this excitement if necessary three hundred times a year, and convey it in popular, direct newspaper articles. Their romance, of course, is professional. The picturesque interest which a Mr. Dilnot feels in a Welsh revival is closely associated with devotion to his business.

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To feel interested is important; but to send in interesting copy is still more important. If we should follow Mr. Dilnot on his breezy journey among ghosts in Wales, or when he attends American beauties travelling in Europe, when he meets Dr. Crippen, visits Russia, or encounters Lord Northcliffe, we shall feel throughout a two-fold psychological attraction—the interest in affairs for their own sake, but still more the interest in affairs as fit subjects for the *Daily Mail*.

But if we should turn to the journalists of another class—those who are working for the type of paper I described in the last chapter—we find a very different state of affairs. In some cases insecurity of employment has made itself felt throughout their ranks. The journalist is serving a paper which seems often to have no definite aim. Those who conduct it do not seem to have made up their minds for what class of reader they are catering.

It is perhaps most often in newspapers of this class that the taint of “coloured” news is to be discovered. Popular papers of the semi-commercial type, which no longer devote much space to political comment, have allowed comment to invade their news columns. “Impressionistic” reports often become reports with a political bias, and we find that the news which is cut down through shortage of space is generally the news which is favourable to a political opponent. Suppression of facts in the interests of party is less degrading than suppression

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of facts in the interests of big finance, but it equally defeats the true end of a newspaper. The humbler journalists are, of course, not likely to resist a practice by which they are enabled to participate in the high policy of their paper.

On the other hand, sheer lack of space in the English popular paper tends to produce terseness and a business-like directness in the reporting of ordinary news. The average newspaper report is much better in style, more direct, more telling, than it was twelve or fifteen years ago, and the reporter is trained in a more exacting school. When he avoids the rhetoric in which he is still allowed to indulge on state occasions, or the exultant political tone of the bye-election report, he is a writer of effective and incisive English.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### AD POPULUM.

I HAVE dwelt at some length upon the less pleasant aspects of the modern Press. I have done so not from any love of muck-raking, nor because I take a pessimistic view of the profession of journalism. On the contrary, I am compelled to see in the history of journalism a progressive evolution, an ever-developing function of society which has as its end the creation of a social, or public, or corporate mind. I see this evolution as the continued expression of a desire felt by the individuals of a nation to be in communication with the rest of the nation, to be informed about the facts that touch them because they are members of a society—this desire growing constantly stronger in proportion as the parts of society are less self-sufficient, and more dependent upon the whole. I see it, in fact, as an integral part of the process which enables society to live a complex, organic life.

But, in looking back, we have had to observe that the growth of this power of intercommunication has been constantly checked by natural and artificial obstacles. At each fresh step forward a

new enemy has presented itself. Sheer distance and the difficulty of multiplying symbols of speech were the main natural obstacles ; they were overcome by printing, by steam, by electricity, by all the instruments that science could devise ; in the case of a country so vast as the United States these obstacles have still to be overcome by mechanical inventions of the future. And we have seen also in every epoch the power of intercommunication checked by some vested interest which either itself manipulated the machinery of public opinion, or attempted to suppress it. Now it was the Church, now the Monarchy, now the Aristocracy, now the Middle Classes which strove to keep in their own hands the power of information, and to-day it is the vested interest of capital that has laid its hand upon the Press. It is this vested interest as an obstacle to the freedom of the Press that I have discussed in the last three chapters. I shall have been very much misunderstood if the reader confuses my account of this obstacle with the essential life-process within the Press itself.

Indeed, what I especially wish to emphasize is that the Press has in the last twenty years been entering upon a greater and vaster enterprise, breaking new ground, broadening its basis, trampling upon old prejudices, encountering therefore new difficulties, manifesting in itself the revolution which is going on in society ; that it is passing through a mighty period of gestation, when all the

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old standards are being re-examined or discarded, and something new is being evolved ; that it is at the same time suffering the *pangs* of gestation, that it is enduring the unsettlement and even anarchy inseparable from revolution ; that it is seeking to group itself so that it may satisfy the groups of men and women, so intricately disposed, so hard to sort, upon whom journalism depends. And if I have dwelt upon the obstacle to the free dissemination of news and opinion presented by the vested interest of capital, upon the drawbacks against which the popular Press will have to struggle, at the same time I recognize that capital itself is not in its nature a power of one complexion, that it is not in its nature opposed to the interests of the community ; I distinctly recognize that it has conferred upon the Press the very instruments which will make it increasingly effective. Those mighty printing machines which seem a miracle of power and invention, that intricate organization of telegraph wire, offices and staff upon which corporate journalism depends, that network of contrivances for distributing printed sheets over thousands of square miles, the whole process of speeding up news and making news accessible and cheap—all these have been made possible only by the power, and the faith, of the capitalist.

We must recognize these services which capital has conferred upon the Press, and we must recognize the restrictions it has imposed. It has

created a powerful instrument for collecting and distributing news, but this instrument has been worked with a view to the alien interests of the shareholder. It has cheapened the newspaper and carried its information to the masses ; but in so doing it has made journalism depend more and more upon vast circulations, so that it is harder to address minorities, or to cater for special interests. It has brought the poorest and most ignorant people into some sort of conscious relation to the national life, but in so doing it could not escape the necessity of making its appeal to a low average of intelligence.

Nor is it a just conception of the Press to speak of it as if its main function were to educate. A newspaper *may* educate, but the more obviously it sets out to do so, the less is it likely to succeed. It is a general experience that the journal which sets out to propagate *views* rather than *news* is read mainly by the people who already hold those views. I do not mean to say that argument in a daily paper does not tell ; but it must be very judiciously presented. You may get people to take powder in their jam, but the jam will be the attraction. In other words, every newspaper, every journal of any kind, must give the public what it wants ; it may give them a little more, or it may elect for one kind of public rather than another, but public taste is its essential basis ; and its skill in discovering and providing for that taste is the measure of its skill as journalism. I do not mean that it may not help

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to mould taste, and even create it, but it can only do so either by deliberately studying it, or satisfying it by some lucky accident.

It is of little avail to blame the Press if it reflects and brings to the surface maladies inherent in the community. It is one thing to blame it when it underestimates the taste of the Public ; it is another, and a futile, thing to blame it when it accurately gauges public taste, however unpleasing that taste may be. It is not itself the disease ; it is a symptom. There is no doubt that the popular Press has done much to promote betting by dealing extensively in betting news. But it is surely obvious that the very act by which you bestow on the crowd the right to be informed gives them also the power to choose their information. You cannot make a man free to be good without also making him free to be evil. And if through the Press you offer to give him only the information you think he ought to have, you are resorting to feudalism, to paternal government, to the Victorian middle-class ideal, the abolition of which is presupposed in a democratic Press. A democratic Press will not only give nice information to the democracy, it must also in some sense represent the democracy, and give it the information it desires. If the men and women in factories, the clerks who go to and fro between their offices and their homes, have not been educated beyond the point of taking interest in betting, in football cup ties, in murders, in law-court scandals, then

they will have a Press—the law of supply and demand will see to it—which will enable them to bet, to talk about football matches, to drink in the horrors of the police station and the law court. The true remedies for this evil are better education, better social conditions, more unselfishness on the part of those who call themselves educated, more public spirit. The upper-class Press might do a good deal to improve the Press which it most of all despises—not by abusing it, but by attempting to promote a more drastic change in their own readers.

If the popular Press is to be blamed, it should surely be blamed not when it gives the public what it wants, but when it gives what it does not want. And that is a fault of which I think it is very often guilty ; and this for a very obvious reason ; that the popular Press is still in its infancy ; the great public to which it addresses itself is still not well known ; there has not yet been time for the thorough sorting and grouping of it in accordance with the laws of journalistic selection. Moreover, the public is quickly changing, quickly developing, quickly resolving itself, so far as it is sorted at all, into new groups, new grades of intelligence.

But let us try to examine, in one or two features prominent in the newspapers, just what kind of changes have been brought about by the appeal to the populace. I confine my attention in this chapter to the English papers. Perhaps the

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most conspicuous change of all is that which led to the cutting down of reports of Parliamentary and other political speeches. That is evidently a loss both to the party politician and to the leisured man interested in party politics. But is it, after all, so great a loss to the community? Lord Rosebery, at any rate, thinks not. I quote from a speech which he delivered before the Press Club last April (1913).

Did any reader of the last twenty years ever read the speeches that were reported? I have no doubt that those whose duty it is to criticize, laud them, or rebuke them in the public Press felt it their painful duty to read the speeches. But did anybody else? Did any important reader of the newspapers, the man who bought a paper on his way to the city in the morning and an evening paper in the evening—did he ever read the speeches? I can conscientiously say, having been a speaker myself, that I never could find anybody who read any speeches.

That, perhaps, is an extreme statement. But the popular journals evidently agree with Lord Rosebery. For long reports of speeches they have substituted short epitomes often presented as the personal impressions of the "sketch" writer—a man whose business it is to select what he thinks important or interesting, and to reproduce the effect of the spoken words through the written words of the journalist.

Clearly a far greater responsibility rests with the journalist whose function it is to select points from a speech, to *describe* it, than with the reporter who

merely reproduces it verbatim. In the old days when speeches were fully, or extensively, reported, the Press fulfilled a very important function—that of being the vehicle of the public speaker—the instrument which carried the speech to an audience of the nation. But this, it should be observed, was an almost mechanical function, faithfully fulfilled ; the journalist only began to interpret when he criticized the speech in a separate leading article. But to-day, in the popular papers, the news itself is presented through the impressions of the descriptive writer. Clearly a far greater responsibility rests with him. If he succeeds in his task, he will reproduce the real speech more effectively than the shorthand reporter ; if he does not succeed, he is falsifying news. Here we have a case where the efficiency of the Press is put to a difficult test. A harder, more delicate task is imposed on the journalist. His triumph may be greater, but there are more chances of failure, more opportunities of abusing his power. He may through prejudice intentionally mislead the public ; or he may through incapacity mislead it unintentionally. Fulfilling such a function as this, he has become a more important person ; from being a reporter he has become an intrepreter.

Nor can we fail to see that Lord Rosebery's remarks, exaggerated perhaps, but in the main true, do indicate the fact that the older Press gave more than its share of attention, I will not say to politics,

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but to party politics. This exaggerated respect for men who do not constitute the whole of public life, as they seem to suppose, and as middle-Victorian merchants supposed, has been broken down. The popular Press has at least asserted one very important fact, which is that party politics is only a small part of the whole of public life ; that a generous public sentiment is and must be turned towards a much greater variety of interests than those peculiar to a number of conventional public gentlemen who confine their attention to one aspect of affairs, the institutional aspect—who have lived in a groove of Liberal and Tory generalizations. It would be a disaster to politics if men continued to think that the thoughts and actions of politicians embrace the whole public life of the country ; it would mean, and did mean in the past, that only those affairs which drew the attention of the party politician were considered to be matters for politics and legislation ; whereas, if, on the contrary, popular sentiment is allowed to play upon all the topics of life, irrespective of party politics, it means that new public interests are thrust forward ; that these too must claim the attention of the politician ; that it is no longer left to him to choose subjects for legislation ; but that legislation is thrust upon him by those who have found independent expression of their needs.

I do not say that the popular Press has very often, so far, been successful in thus focussing pub-

lic opinion on new and vital questions of public interest. And I shall show in a moment why it has not fulfilled this function so fully as might have been expected. But it has, at any rate, broken down much of the superstition which gathered round politicians as politicians. In moments of crisis it does concentrate public attention for just so long as the crisis lasts ; and upon its judgment, or, on the other hand, upon its volatility, rests the responsibility for the wisdom or rashness of such action as is promptly taken. That its unanimous voice can produce instant results without the intervention of Government was shown in the matter of the Aisgill railway accident. It seemed that the Midland Railway Company was attempting to hush up inquiry. This, at least, was the view taken, almost unanimously, by the Press ; and the result was that this inquiry had to be conducted with open doors ; that possible causes of the accident, suggested by the papers, had to be considered ; and that no railway company in future will dare, from very fear of losing passengers, to retain the old dangerous system of lighting their carriages. If loss of life could again be attributed to the use of gas cylinders on the Midland Railway, that company would probably be ruined.

Lord Rosebery, in this speech of his before the Press Club, dwelt upon the power of the Press in moments of crisis, and particularly emphasized its influence in regard to peace and war.

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With regard to peace and war, upon those issues you have paramount influence—far greater than any Member of Parliament ; as great as any Minister of the Crown himself. You, when critical occasions arise, can either magnify them or minimize them. I pray you, in issues that involve peace and war, diminish them as much as possible. We to-day reap the glory of the wars of 1813, a hundred years ago ; we reap the glory without the suffering. You, I think, and I speak it from the bottom of my heart, have a power more than any other body of men to promote or avert the horrors of war.

The half-penny Press certainly did much to present the occasion for a war at the end of the last century—a war for which, as I have already said, public feeling seemed in any case to be “working up.” But it presented the occasion ; it focussed the popular passion ; it expressed it and fomented it. It may seem curious that the man who in recent years has done more probably than any other European to frustrate war, to prove that it was unprofitable, who was probably the guiding spirit behind that diplomacy which checked the Great Powers from rushing into the Balkan conflict, was actually on the staff of the *Daily Mail*. I allude to Mr. Norman Angell.

And this brings me to a second point ;—the prestige of the “leading article” has gone. The special signed article has taken its place.

*The Times*, the *Morning Post*, the *Westminster Gazette*, and the chief provincial papers still retain their weighty leading articles. But in all but two of these the editorial utterance has lost much of its

influence, the two exceptions being *The Times* and the *Westminster Gazette*. But even *The Times* leaders retain their full weight only abroad ; those in the *Westminster* keep it only through the personal prestige of Mr. Alfred Spender. The half-penny papers have reduced the space allotted to editorial judgment to a minimum, though I observe that quite recently the *Daily Mail* has been developing this feature. Nevertheless, there are no papers, excepting those I have mentioned, which give the same space or weight to editorial articles as was allotted twenty or a dozen years ago. What is the reason of this ? In the first place, the practice of going early to Press did not give leader-writers time to express deliberate judgments upon late news ; but secondly—and this was the determining reason—they were not read.

The leading articles were not read for precisely the same reason that the long reports of speeches were not read. Most of the Victorian "leader-writers" were party politicians, reflecting the same fixed opinions, thinking in the same grooves, bounded by the same narrow view of life as the party men at Westminster. The growth of the democracy in the new century thrust more and more vital interests into prominence. This indifference to politics may have been discovered through an accident, through the fact that the popular papers were supposed to be addressing crowds too stupid to be interested in politics ; in

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effect it proved that the crowd was interested in a vast number of other public questions which had never been brought within the purview of the politician. Editorial criticism, within the old-fashioned limits, was bound to disappear.

At first the popular papers substituted sensational, "gossipy," or rhetorical, signed articles. A signature has always been dear to the crowd, which knows nothing of institutions, but which can understand a name and a person. Readers were also given popular renderings of expert opinion on all sorts of subjects, prepared by the interviewer. The interviewer did for the expert who talked to him what the Parliamentary sketch-writer did for the Parliamentary speaker—he interpreted him, rather than reported him. But within the last few years the best of the popular newspapers have been introducing the expert in his own person before the public ; he writes his own articles ; they appear under his own signature.

No longer does a universally inspired leader-writer thunder out his authoritative dogmas. Every day one or more of the topics which are supposed to be the topics of the hour are discussed by experts, or by men who have earned a special right to speak. The sensational and gossipy articles are still to be found, but side by side with them—and this is a most significant modern development—are to be found serious discussions of all the problems of the day by persons of recognized authority.

In one paper we may find eminent persons in politics, literature, drama, law, medicine, economics, etc., setting forth their knowledge and their opinions for the crowd—for the crowd that reads a half-penny paper.

That is significant. If the paper which has the largest circulation, which has always shown itself quickly responsive to the popular taste, can find room every day for an authoritative statement of fact or opinion about a matter of public interest, a flood of light is thrown upon the public no less than the Press.

I am well aware that there are other popular papers which do nothing of the kind, which contrive to present the crudest sensationalism, chiefly in a pictorial form.

But it is something that the half-penny Press should be sharply divided in this way. If a public company can produce every day two papers, one of which retains all the blatancy of the earlier popular journals, whilst the other, with a larger circulation, caters for a distinctly superior taste, that at least shows that the new journalism is beginning to discover the various elements of which the public is composed, and not to treat it as if it were all of the most degraded type.

I have said that the popular papers have not very often been able to fix public attention in such a way that practical and permanent results have followed. I think this is due to the fact that in

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studying a variety of tastes, in attempting to strike an average, in the consequent sheer diffusion of interest, it has lost the power of holding the attention upon any one topic for any length of time. The Victorian newspapers not only had more space : they were interested in fewer subjects, and on these they gave not only fuller news, but continuous news. The modern half-penny paper has less space, and in this it attempts to give news upon any and every subject ; and the result is it can only devote full attention to questions which are "up," which are critical, which have for the moment sensational value. They give full attention to a war in the Balkans so long as sensational battles are being fought there ; but at any other time it is difficult to learn the current news about the Balkan States—news which might be pregnant with possibilities even of a fresh war, or dealing with the permanent results of the last war, though not for the moment sensational. It is impossible to find continuous news upon such a subject in any of the popular papers. And similarly with all other questions. The Panama Canal toll, a trade-union strike, the censorship of books by the Library Association, the political condition of Ireland, the Territorial Army, the cure of consumption, the revolution in China, the Japanese invasion of America, the colour question in South Africa—these and hundreds of other matters of general interest are brought before the public at

moments of crisis, but at moments of crisis only ; the events that led up to it are neglected till the crisis is there ; and the consequences are neglected when the crisis is over.

The gravest aspect of modern daily journalism, and of popular journalism especially, is this fact that it fails to present continuous news ; that any person specially interested in a given subject cannot keep himself informed about it through the daily Press ; that so far as that Press is concerned he is not allowed to attend to any one subject with the consistency necessary to the formation of opinion. No doubt it has captured a public which in the past not only failed to form opinions about public questions, but did not even extend to them a fleeting attention. It is something that this fleeting attention should have been caught. But with those sections of the public which are or were willing to concentrate on such matters the Daily Press has lost much of its influence—its opinion-making power. Those who would be “well informed” must look elsewhere.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### RE-ORGANIZATION.

THE half-penny daily paper, at its best, has become a very different thing from the half-penny paper of ten years ago. It gives quicker news, more news, and it is more responsible in its comment. It is developing into a finer organ of information and opinion, and will probably continue to develop. It has brought a new vitality into the whole profession of journalism. But it is not yet equal to the task of coping adequately with the news of the world. It is not yet capable of dealing with special interests ; it is still inclined to neglect minorities, even those which are the most profitable, namely, the influential minorities. It does not present a continuous, progressive, coherent account of the national life. And if this is true of the best English popular papers, those of America are still further from attaining the ideal. The former started with this great advantage, that they were able to distribute themselves over the greater part of the country, and could make an essentially national appeal ; whilst the latter were localized, and were faced with the competing interests of local affairs and the affairs of a vast nation.

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And here we must again recall the fact that the larger and more complex the community, the more difficult and intricate becomes the task of linking together the parts. In the ancient city-State the task was easy. North Italy and the Netherlands contained the most flourishing and also the most cultured communities in the Middle Ages, chiefly perhaps because they reproduced the type of the city-State. We have seen that nothing short of an efficient public Press, aided by other means of inter-communication, could make England into a compact nation ; and that until the end of the nineteenth century the mass of the working classes were really excluded from the national life. The task of the popular Press—no matter what the motives with which it was founded—was that of bringing the mass of the people into the corporate, conscious life of the community.

This was its task. But how difficult a one ! The nation was suddenly enlarged. As a community its numbers were doubled, trebled, quadrupled. If already the system of inter-communication was intricate and complex, how much more so when the nation as a reading community was overwhelmed, almost submerged, by the dramatic upheaval of this prodigious underworld. New and infinitely various facts of life dawned upon the national consciousness ; new interests had been created, new aspects of things, new possibilities of revolution. How was the Press to cope with this

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prodigious world of fresh interests, and give a continuous, coherent, satisfactory stream of news and ideas, an account of the ever-changing life-movements which live just in proportion as they are uttered and understood?

No single daily paper, professing to deal with all the news of the world, nor even any number of general daily papers, could do much to satisfy the new need; and if not in England, still less in America. Every other conceivable kind of publication had to be drawn upon to supply the new demand, to cope with the needs of the new community. Weekly and monthly journals, catalogues, posters, circulars, reference books, annuals—everything had to be thought of and is being thought of to provision and organize this advancing mob and turn it into a citizen army.

In this active movement which is going on, the Press must not be conceived as an agency standing aloof from the community, providing it with certain things that it needs, but otherwise indifferent. The Press lies essentially within the community. In one sense it is a mere instrument. In another sense it is only the fluttering of ideas between men and men. It is like the wind which makes all the leaves of a poplar rustle and shiver in unison, each leaf responding just so far as the branch or twig from which it hangs exposes it to the influence. And, like the wind, it may be composed of numberless conflicting currents of air, striking now in this way, now in that.

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It is the whole vocal community which carries on the activity. Here there are groups of men at the centre of affairs talking about politics and endeavouring to translate talk into action ; all over the country there are subsidiary groups of men talking about the same political affairs, closely or loosely in touch with the groups at the centre. The Press steps in as a go-between, between these men at the centre and these supporters of theirs all over the country.

And in the same way there are groups of men and women, dramatists, theatrical managers, actors and actresses, agents, etc., engaged in the task of producing plays, and men and women all over the country interested in plays, seeing them, talking about them. The Press here also is the intermediary—the newspaper announcement, the critic, the illustrated gossip journal, even the printed play-bill fulfil their various functions.

And I might go on to enumerate group after group of general and special merchants and manufacturers and particular kinds of merchants and manufacturers, shipping men, motor-car dealers, bicycle-makers, etc., and all the inter-related groups of customers interested in ships, motor-cars and bicycles : trade-union leaders and officials, with all the hundreds of thousands of working-men upon whose unanimity the collective action of trade-unionism depends : cricketers and all the lovers of cricket throughout England who constitute

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a special community of sporting-men : base-ball players in America and their vast following throughout the States : architects and builders, including every variety between the jerry-builder and the model-village designer, and all the people who live in houses : doctors : lawyers : sailors : stamp-collectors : tailors : hat-makers and hat-wearers : fashion-designers and fashion-followers : bookbinders : potters : printers : school-teachers : suffragettes : vegetarians : teetotallers : anti-vivisectionists : district-visitors and charity organizers : spiritualists : all the adherents of the various religions : diplomats : barmaids : aviators : swimmers —we could not possibly exhaust the list. All of these individuals whom we might thus arrange in groups are what they are by virtue of the fact that they are co-operating with others in like condition with themselves, or with those who serve them or are served by them. Co-operation, collaboration, constant inter-communication are of the very essence of these groups into which humanity arranges itself ; and at every moment the Press, in some form or another, is an important—in the long run, probably, the most important—element in the mechanism which connects them. It is the mechanism devised to carry thought beyond the range of the human voice or the hand-written letter.

Those who control this mechanism are not merely instructors of the public ; they are a part of the public, and, in the aggregate, are much more representative of it than Members of Parliament or

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County Councils. Consider some of its humbler and some of its specialized forms. The Parish Magazine sets out to give an account of the collective religious work of a parish. It is written and edited by parishioners, church-workers, by just such people as those who read it, though the writers are perhaps distinguished by being the controlling influences within the group by reason of greater energy or enthusiasm. A school-magazine is written for the boys and Old Boys of a school ; those who edit and write it are school-boys themselves, differing in no special respect from their fellows except that they may be cleverer or have more knack of expressing themselves.

Or we may consider those trade-journals which represent the interests of makers, distributors, and consumers of a particular kind of manufactured article. The motor-car journal is conducted by a man who may not necessarily be a typical motorists or motor-car dealer himself, but who gets his information and his ideas from such people. The editors and writers of fashion articles share their views about the world of fashion with the ladies who study them ; they have their eyes on the same dressmakers and the same elegant leaders of society. The various religious papers are written by men who themselves belong to the religious groups, and are more or less in touch with the leading spirits within those groups. The *Theosophical Review* is conducted by Theosophists for Theosophists ; the *Journal of Education* by edu-

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cationists for educationists ; and so on. The journalist may pick up a certain professional journalistic quality ; but, nevertheless, he is closely in touch, directly or through intermediaries, with the central figures in the group to which he and his readers belong. In the aggregate these specialized journalists represent these special groups ; and they perform a necessary function in keeping the group together.

But it is not so easy to trace the direct relation between journalists and public when we come to the general, varied interests in all that is going on in the world—the cosmopolitan world, the world of the newspaper. We may see this relation between those who conduct special features in a paper and those among its readers who are specially interested in these features. Undoubtedly many persons have taken in the *Daily News* especially to read the cycling articles of "Kuklos." Some take *The Times* especially for its Financial Supplement. A great many people used to take in the *Daily Telegraph* for its acrostics. But these so-called "features" in the daily paper have not the qualities which are characteristic of a newspaper. A newspaper professes to record all the news, to give the facts in which every one—irrespective of special interests—is supposed to take an interest. But here it is much harder to fix the relationship between journalist and reader. It is one thing for the editor of a motoring journal to know what events will interest a motoring

public ; it is another thing for the editor of a universal newspaper to decide which of all the events in all the world, which of all the ideas that are being noised about in all the world, are those which will interest the average man. We see that in practice the newspapers do tend to adjust themselves to broad groups of readers, as is shown in the kind of news they select, the emphasis they give, their external appearance, the tone that almost insensibly comes to affect the whole organism. Each newspaper, though it professes to be universal in its information, becomes an individual thing, unique, and not only in respect of its politics. Originating instinct, or a sort of sympathy, on the one hand, and professional experience, or habit, on the other, produce the result. Experience and habit count for more than originating instinct in such a paper as the London *Times* ; for the class of people to which it appeals is well known ; their tastes, interests, and even prejudices have long been studied. It is <sup>?</sup> peculiarly difficult for editors of *The Times* to decide what to give, and what tone to adopt for their readers, for the simple reason that the process of sorting out a *Times* public has been completed, and it only remains to find judicious and accomplished men to carry on the traditions. The real difficulty of this great paper is that it appeals to a public which is not increasing. As an enterprise resting necessarily on an enormous financial basis it can scarcely be content with its present circle of readers ; and for this reason some

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change is to be expected, offering fresh scope to the originating instinct of the journalist, the sympathetic faculty for divining the interests of new readers without offending the old. *The Times* has always given more authoritative information than any other newspaper in the world. It remains to be seen whether it will broaden the basis of this information ; or make it more human without making it less thorough ; or develop its present policy of publishing special supplements, which may introduce new readers and new advertisers interested in special subjects ; or whether it may not take the still more important step of allying itself with a cheap, comprehensive daily paper which will epitomize all the news of *The Times*, with all the authority of *The Times*, a paper which may be scanned by those anxious to see at a glance the general news of the day, whilst they can turn to *The Times* itself for detailed and continuous information on the questions they consistently follow.

At any rate, we observe that *The Times* as it is to-day is a creature of habit—very good habits, of course—appealing to a small, well-defined, but exceedingly influential group of readers, among whom are the most important writers in all the other English papers, and many abroad. In the same way such journals as the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Morning Post*, the *Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, in Great Britain, and the *Boston Transcript*, the *New York Herald* and the *New York Times* in America, must depend to a very great extent on

professional experience and habit, for they too have long ago discovered a well-defined public, whose taste they have already gauged, and sufficiently numerous to cause them no serious qualms on the score of circulation. The *Daily News* and the New York *Tribune* are apparently wavering between two different kinds of public, and in both cases it will be interesting to see to which group each, as the result of added experience and time, will finally adjust itself. The London *Daily Chronicle* and the New York *World*, papers which in many ways may be compared, have steered a definite course towards a definite end. But the circle of readers for which each caters is very large and various in its tastes, and at every moment the news instinct must be put severely to the test. Most of all, perhaps, is it called for in the London *Daily Mail*, which caters for a public not only larger but more various than that of any other daily paper written in English. To keep such a group as this together must exact from the journalist a singular instinct for gauging the average man, the average taste, the average of common sense and prejudice.

It is evident that the more popular a paper is and the larger its circulation, the more difficult will be the task of giving its readers what they want ; for it must strike a broader average, ignoring special interests and idiosyncrasies. Mr. Robert Donald has said that there will be fewer daily papers in the future. If his forecast is correct, it implies that there must be more periodicals of

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another kind. For it surely means that the daily paper would, in the main, cease to be an organ of opinion ; evidently there would not be enough papers to represent the different kinds of opinion. If, for instance, the proprietors of the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily News* decided to amalgamate, then one of them would have to lose a character which it now possesses, or both would lose their characters (I do not mean this invidiously), and a totally different paper would emerge. It is true the same sort of opinion is represented in the "leader" columns of both these journals. Both give much attention to labour questions, both give considerable space to literature and drama. But they appeal to different types of mind. Each has its own way of dealing with news. Each has an atmosphere of its own. They do not appeal to the same public. The circle which is attached to the one is different from the circle attached to the other. If they were amalgamated, one of them would lose its distinctive note, and to that extent the special taste which one or the other represents would cease to be represented.

But journalists should bear in mind that amalgamations of this kind, and amalgamations on a vaster scale, are not unthinkable. For we have seen by what necessary process journalism has fallen into the hands of the capitalist ; and the capitalist in the nature of things must look for profits ; he must seek larger circulations ; he must therefore tend to discover the average taste which he can

gratify, a taste not too delicately differentiated in matters of opinion; he must tend to do what the proprietors of the *Daily Mail* have done with such signal success—cater as efficiently as possible for a reader who wants to see the news of the world at a glance, but demands no editorial bias, no definite, homogeneous opinion.

But such a paper, it will be objected, however efficiently and cleverly it may be edited, however reliable in its information, must in the long run tend to defeat its own ends. For if it is assumed, as the editors of such papers are beginning to assume, that the great general public is becoming better educated and therefore more exacting in its taste, it will never be satisfied by that sheer diffusion of interest already alluded to, the variety of little items of news which defeats attention, the lack of concentration which is implied in the exclusive reading of such a paper. Exclusive! That is the point. The only escape that presents itself from the sheer dissipation of journalism is that the daily paper will not be the only kind of paper read by the majority.

We cannot expect that every Englishman will read *The Times*. In some future and Utopian condition of society every citizen, perhaps, will be obliged to consult some such authoritative journal to which he can refer every day for detailed news about special subjects. But even then he will be glad to have some other paper at which he may glance, from which he can get in a quarter of an hour the gist of the day's news. Englishmen who

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have not indefinite leisure are beginning to need short daily papers ; and most intelligent Americans are irritated with their own voluminous news-sheets. They complain of the time that is wasted in picking out the essential news from the masses of inessential and trivial news. It is doubtful if any new large daily paper could be established in England unless it followed the small papers to the extent of putting all the general news of the day, shortly but completely, in the prominent pages, presenting its special and more detailed treatment in more remote and recondite pages. The short daily paper has become a necessary thing. But it cannot be in any full sense of the term an organ of opinion. The modern capitalistic control (involving large circulations) and, I am inclined to think, modern taste, are tending to defeat the end of those who would make the popular all-round newspaper a medium also for a definite set of opinions.

The public requires its short daily newspaper, and something more. It may need a *Times*, or it may need an evening paper like the *Westminster Gazette*, which is an organ of opinion more than it is a vehicle for news ; or it may look to specialized morning papers like the *Daily Citizen* in Manchester and the *Daily Herald* in London, which are devoted to the interests of the working classes ; or to the very vigorous and able New York journal, the *Call*, which presents the case for labour in an extreme but effective way. The *Citizen* and the *Herald* might never have been started if the exist-

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ing popular papers had not still been to some extent under the influence of the Victorian tradition ; the latter, clever as they were in gauging the public, underestimated the growing influence of labour and the interest in labour questions. In this respect they still revealed a middle-class bias, and the popular journalists failed to realize the vast potentiality of labour and the crowd attached to its interests. They failed to give it the share of attention to which it was entitled.

The *Citizen* and the *Herald* in England, and the *Call* in America, were founded to redress the balance. Regarded from the standpoint of general daily newspapers it was natural that these newcomers should shift the balance to the other side ; that they should undervalue the importance of general news, and devote more than its share of attention, even from the standpoint of their own readers, to labour politics. This was inevitable, and perhaps desirable, for with the Press in its present condition the balance is still against labour and due attention to news about labour. But this special emphasis has tended to take them out of the category of general newspapers, and bring them under the category of subsidiary organs of opinion. The working-man who would be informed about the news of the world must read not only his labour paper, but another paper as well.

Social reformers to-day demand of the average citizen that he should take the same interest in public affairs as was expected from every citizen in

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ancient Athens. The Athenian who did not take an interest in the corporate life of the State was stigmatized as an *idiōtēs*. Our political system presupposes this public spirit in every voter. How are men competent to return representatives to Westminster if they do not know what sort of a country it is that they are to govern? How are they qualified to elect county and borough councillors, to decide on measures of public health and education, if they do not know what is being done in the world to promote public health and education? The democracy has been made theoretically responsible for these things, and the same demand is made from the modern citizen as from the ancient Athenian. But the demand is more exacting. The whole mechanism of the modern State is more complicated. Every day the daily paper puts before the reader a confusing mass of unconnected facts drawn from the infinitely varied life of the nation and the world. How can the average citizen get from this paper even the minimum of information necessary to an ordered picture of the movements of the day?

He cannot get it. He must turn to weekly and monthly papers, and to books. He needs some regular medium through which the most vital and essential, the human and the national, issues are brought together, and presented with continuity and coherence.

This has been realized in the United States

much more thoroughly than it has been realized in England. And necessarily so, for whilst the English daily papers have clung to their opinion-making privileges, and have been disinclined to relinquish them, the American papers have never to the same extent possessed them. For nearly a century the daily paper has been the typical organ of British opinion. Great as has been the influence of the monthly and quarterly Reviews, that of the daily paper has been greater. It has held the premier place in respect of circulation ; it has been the national organ *par excellence*. But the American daily paper, as we have seen, had always to contend with geographical difficulties ; it was necessarily a paper with a local circulation only, and for this reason it could scarcely attain national prestige. Whilst the English daily papers circulated more widely than any other kind of journal, no American daily paper can compare in circulation with some of the American weeklies and some of the monthly magazines.

The representative, national journalism of America is to be found in its weekly and monthly Press. Once a week, once a month, these organs both of fact and of opinion can be distributed over the whole area of the States, and can find their way each to its own special, sympathetic circle scattered over the whole country. Men who are interested in politics, big finance, sociology, literature, drama, ideas of any kind, and the facts which are the basis

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of ideas, seek their information not primarily in the daily papers, but in the weeklies and monthlies. Everybody reads one or more of those journals, many of which are not only popular, but also vital and urgent ; not only sensational, but also, from the American standpoint, human and significant.

Very far indeed from the spirit of the daily papers are such influential weeklies as the *New York Nation* and the *Outlook*. These are nearest to a type that is familiar in England. More characteristic of American journalism, and essentially popular in their appeal, are such journals as *Collier's Weekly* and *Harpers' Weekly*, which week by week focus opinion upon current national topics. In the same way the most popular weekly paper in America, the *Saturday Evening Post*, enjoying a circulation which would scarcely be credited in England, is important as a national organ, discussing every week matters in which all Americans are interested.

But the most thorough and authoritative handling of such topics, the most weighty and yet the most popular presentation of all that is going on across the Continent of North America, is to be found in the monthly magazines. Every self-respecting person reads the magazines. Every one gets most of his stock of current information from them. And they are of all kinds. The only journal which corresponds to the English half-crown Reviews is the *North American*. More characteristic of well-informed American taste are the

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*Atlantic Monthly*, *Scribners'*, *Harpers'* and the *Century*; whilst those which are cheaper and more popular still are not less authoritative, and certainly not less influential—the *American Magazine*, *McClure's*, the *Metropolitan* and half a dozen others.

The weekly and monthly Press of Great Britain has nothing which in popular influence can compare with the weekly and monthly Press of America. The London *Nation*, the power of which lies in the fact that it influences those who influence others, is probably superior to anything in America; but it is not in its nature a widely popular journal. The *Spectator*, with a larger following, appeals also to an audience of a special character. The *Saturday Review*, the *Outlook*, the *New Statesman*, and the *New Witness* all represent a high level of journalism, but the average Englishman is indifferent to them; they do not strike the popular note. There are indeed dozens of papers, popular enough, which cater for the amusement of the crowd, which leave, no doubt, their subconscious effects upon the mind; but they have little authority; they are not organs of opinion; they exercise no such influence as that wielded by several American weeklies. Indeed, the only English weekly journals which strike a level between the intellectual and the trivial papers are *T.P.'s Weekly* and *Everyman*, and of these the first is confined to literary interests, and the second has a bias in the same direction.

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But if the weeklies fail to cope in a popular, vigorous, authoritative manner with current topics, still less is there any attempt to do so in English magazine literature. The old-fashioned English Reviews are designed mainly for party politicians, whilst they have lost much of their former dignity and authority. The cheap popular magazines, on the other hand, make no serious attempt to touch public life and ideas. The only monthly journal which for alertness and vitality can really compare with the American magazines, is the *English Review*; but it is not the function of this journal to cover the whole field of life; it caters for a special class.

We are thus confronted with the fact that whilst the English daily journal is losing much of its old opinion-reflecting power, nothing has yet arisen to take its place. Its tradition is still strong, and it has attracted to itself much of the best journalistic capacity. But by the necessities of its existence it is gradually abandoning its old traditions, and gaining efficiency along new lines. One of the greatest functions of journalism is therefore inadequately fulfilled, and the inchoate democracy is left in its intellectual confusion. When this is more fully realized we shall see a re-adjustment of weekly and monthly journalism. New functions will be taken over by such a Press, and fulfilled in England with the vigour with which they have long been fulfilled in America.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE CIRCULATION OF BOOKS.

IT may seem strange that in discussing the condition and influence of the Press I have said so little about the function of the book. But if I have neglected this, the most important and the most permanent product of the Press, that is only because there is so little to be said about it that has not been said again and again. This is not the place to sing the praises of literature or to dwell upon the part it plays in the national consciousness. It is enough that we should realize that whilst books of the more ephemeral order differ scarcely at all, in their functions, from periodical journalism, books of a higher order serve the purpose of registering the finer products of each age, of linking together the men of one age with the men of another, just as journalism links together men of the same age.

For in all this discussion it has been evident—it has indeed been presupposed—that ideas supply the driving power by which a nation exists, co-operates, and progresses. The paper which gives news and news alone is none the less dealing in

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ideas. The journal which feeds its readers on gossip and sensation is providing them with the stuff of consciousness. The most ephemeral journalism and the highest forms of literature are both in the first place speech—speech which reaches beyond the limits of the human voice. And in so far as this speech is heard, it has some effect, however minute, upon the mind that is aware of it, and at any moment it may present the idea which precipitates action.

Journalism is the speech that circulates quickly, and is quickly forgotten. If it is not destined to be forgotten, it passes into a book, and assumes a more permanent form. If there are leading and lasting ideas in journalism, they only gain their lasting effect, as journalism, by repetition. Many books, indeed the great majority, belong in their nature to journalism ; that is to say, they deal with ephemeral matters in an ephemeral way ; they are read once, put aside, and forgotten. But the books that are books, in Charles Lamb's sense of the term, are, firstly, *considered* speech, and secondly, *representative* speech ; because they are considered, they merit exact attention ; and because they are representative, they are concerned with those ideas or images symbolical of the life known to other men. Thus they are communicative in the fullest sense of the term, communicating something that is common to human nature, and at the same time unique. They present ideas which become

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the common property of a nation or of the world, and the men who read them enter into the common inheritance which is part of the consciousness of an age or of many ages.

Books are the means by which civilization registers the whole product of the human consciousness. It is only in so far as individuals assimilate as much as possible of this collective knowledge, in its social and human aspect rather than in the academic sense, that they can be "forces" in their own age, or even "good citizens," as the phrase goes. It is only in proportion as they have assimilated some of this common stock of wisdom that they are in a position to profit by the more ephemeral information of journalism. In other words, education is the only possible basis of a profitable journalism—profitable, I mean, for the individual spirit and for society. Journalism depends for its effect upon the nature of the soil on which it falls. A country which needs good books will demand a good journalism, and the class which is accessible to literature is the class which also derives ideas from the information of the moment, which uses those ideas and translates them into action.

The book form, it is true, is used for much that is neither literature, in the full sense of the term, nor journalism. There are books of information, about politics, agriculture, handicraft, what-not, books about arithmetic, history, geography, etc. But all such works, informative and educational,

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are either epitomes—reports, they may be called—of more important literature ; or in so far as they are non-derivative, and original, to that extent they spring from the inventive and creative consciousness which is the basis of art, science and philosophy.

There is one fundamental distinction between literature and journalism. The one is free, the other is seldom or never free. The author of a book may write whatsoever he will ; it is his absolutely ; it is his to cast on the world, to be accepted or rejected of men. Even in the days when the Press was gagged, when the Licenser was a terror to author and printer, a book was written before it was restrained ; and when a book has been written, it exists, and may survive to be printed for future generations as Thomas Traherne's Poems were published after two centuries of interment.

But the work of the essential journalist does not exist till it is published. It is written for the day, and with the day it must perish, unless it enjoys that one brilliant moment which gives it the immortality of an “effect.” In the seventeenth century it might be suppressed before it was born. To-day it is subject to the caprice of a commercial or semi-commercial Press.

The journalist to-day depends upon the caprice of editors or proprietors, or upon the unusual accident of the possession of a fortune. The author may write what he will, and throw his goods before

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the public, assuming that he has that modicum of merit or plausibility required by a publisher.

He is free to indulge his imagination, his intellect, or his caprice to his heart's content, though he may possibly starve in his bliss. That indeed is a drawback. He is free, but unlike the journalist he has no instrument ready to his hand, the instrument created by the capitalist. The vested interest of the newspaper or the great weekly or monthly journal may have something of tyranny in it, but it also confers power—if no other power, the power of publicity. The established periodical has before it a public, an aggregation of interested readers, a group of people drawn to it by dint of constant repetition. The modern author, until he is known, has no means of reaching his audience excepting the loudness of his own voice, or the loudness of the voices of his publisher and friends.

The modern author is free from the tyranny of the vested interest, but he also lacks its support. The vast unsorted public, exposed to the temptation of books at every turn, has little chance of responding quickly to those rarer influences which manifest themselves slowly; for there is no agency which directs them straight to an appreciative audience.

Here, then, we find an unsettlement in the world of books even more disturbing than the unsettlement in journalism—a confusion wrought by the multiplying of readers and the corresponding multiplication of writers. When ten books are put

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before ten thousand readers, each book has a good chance of finding its way to those for whose tastes it is adapted. But when ten thousand books are put before ten million readers, what is the chance that the rare and unique qualities of a few of these will be discovered by all or most of that minority which could appreciate them? Advertisement, it will be said, will introduce them. But the capitalist who controls advertising is interested in majorities, and gives less attention to the small minority which cares for the new and unique thing. In time, it is true, genius manifests itself; or at any rate history tells us nothing of the genius which was lost. But in the meantime, before it manifests itself, what waste, what loss of the permeative energy of rare ideas which are more vital for the present even than for posterity!

It is supremely important, not only to publishers and authors, but to society, that the rarer and finer works should have the same opportunity of reaching their small and influential public as is enjoyed by the popular books which advertise their existence to the larger public. But every year it becomes increasingly difficult to introduce such books to their own proper audience.

Is there any remedy? So far as authors of classic repute are concerned, a remedy has already been found. Publishers have for many years been selling cheap editions of standard authors in series. The series serves to advertise itself by repetition,

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just as a periodical, by constantly re-appearing, at last finds its way to its own circle. There are a few publishers who are attempting to do the same thing with new books. By issuing series of new books of a similar character, none falling below a certain standard of excellence, they hope to give to each book the prestige accumulated by the series. The classic instance of this method of publication is "The English Men of Letters" series, first edited by Lord Morley. But it is much easier to apply this method to a number of biographical or critical works written by authors already distinguished than to works of "creative" art, such as novels and poems, by authors not yet distinguished. That the method could be employed I have no doubt, but its success would depend wholly upon the discrimination of the publisher, or his editor.

But methods such as these, which will certainly be adopted, will not be sufficient. Much of the influence of fine literature must be wasted until something more is known about the public than is known at present. Who are the people who read books? Who are the people who read books of this sort and of that? Where are they to be found? It is only when these questions can be satisfactorily answered that authorship and publishing can flourish, and the finest ideas can permeate the community. Statistics of the operation of ideas are surely not of less public importance than statistics of employment, ages, births and deaths.

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The latter are compiled in a Government Census ; but the former are ignored.

It is not likely that any Government will have the imagination to take a census of ideas, to classify the public according to their taste in literature. But if no Government will undertake the task, publishers and booksellers, acting in co-operation, might do it for themselves, not exhaustively, perhaps, but with sufficient accuracy to serve the purpose. Should they refuse to co-operate, the time will probably come when the reading public, in its own interests, will take the matter into its own hands.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE NATION ARTICULATE.

CIVILIZATION is not an unqualified blessing, but the only modern alternative is the scarcely plausible scheme of the Simple Life. There is one real cure for the evils of civilization, and that, as Mr. Wells has again and again told us, is more civilization. We cannot return to barbarism, for barbarism is bestial, and we have lost the habit of unmitigated bestiality. We cannot become hermits, for the world is not big enough to support a thousand million hermits. We are "social animals"; and that, from the external point of view, is our distinguishing feature as human beings. The animals that have learnt to hunt in packs have taken the irrevocable first step upon the unending path of civilization. It is the first step in co-operation, and if men have evolved far beyond the pack stage, it has only been by taking advantage of everything that helped them to co-operate. The history of man might resolve itself into a history of the contrivances which made co-operation, through self-expression, possible—a co-operation first for mere survival, and afterwards, through art, for the purpose of delight. Men first acted together, as

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wolves do, without the faculty of coherent speech. As they developed and perfected the art of speech, the device for making known their wants and their demands, and for sharing with others their savage delights and griefs, they were developing the essential and distinguishing function of society, sharpening the instrument by which the social animal exists. It was a dangerous instrument, for just as it enabled the tribe to exist as a tribe, and drive off the foe from without, so also it was a weapon which could be used by the most powerful members of the tribe to subdue and subjugate the rest. In the power of the orator and the power of the man who controlled messengers there grew up, within, a potential, insidious foe capable of defeating the co-operative instinct in proportion as the co-operative unit was made larger and impregnable against an outer enemy.

Throughout the whole history of man we may watch the parallel growth of these two instincts—the social or fellowship instinct, which makes men follow up every device for union, for sharing, for labour-saving, for mutual benefit—and the egoistic or privilege-seeking instinct, by which a few seek to capture these devices and turn them to their private, anti-social advantage. The civilizing progress represents an unending series of conflicts, between society and the invader on the one hand, and between society and the tyrant on the other, each successive phase reproducing the conflict in a new form, each triumph of society opening a fresh

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field of plunder to the tyrant, and a renewed struggle within the organism.

The chief devices by which men learnt to co-operate were devices for perfecting communication—for expressing wants, demands, ideas. Language was the basic device which human beings hit upon. The next great step forward was the device of writing, and this in its turn led to the device of printing, and printing was further developed by numberless other devices—steam-power, electric power, traction, etc.

We may look back across the centuries and see man in his social capacity adapting and using these contrivances to help him against extinction on the one hand and tyranny on the other, the latter triumphing, when the former threatens, and extinction too often following with swift brutality when the tyrant is removed. In the city-State of Greece men discovered a perfect society for intercourse and communication, for reducing privilege to a minimum. But the social bond of speech upon which a Greek democracy depended was adequate only to a small society; and such a society fell an easy victim to the foreign aggressor.

The city-State, which is the only perfect social unit when language is still confined to the spoken or hand-written word, was not strong enough to resist the nation, or empire. The nation, or the empire, was the new social unit, but though it was strong against external aggression, it was disunited within. The renewed conflict was directed against

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the tyrant, a hopeless struggle until men extended the range of speech by the contrivance of printing.

We have seen the various elements within a modern society endeavouring to make use of this new contrivance of long-range speech, each element becoming a real integral part of society exactly in proportion as it got hold of this instrument and could use it effectively. We have seen the tyrant appearing now in this form, now in that, endeavouring to monopolize the powerful weapon of the Press, now yielding, now contesting the field afresh. King, aristocracy and the middle-classes sought in their turn to keep to themselves the privilege which is the basis of citizenship and power; and the capitalist, who is still with us, has attempted to use the instrument in a more insidious way.

We have seen that in a country which is not too large this long-range speech of the Press is just, or nearly, far-reaching enough to stretch across the nation, and is now penetrating vertically as well as horizontally. We have seen that a country so vast as the United States must still further improve its mechanism, its contrivances, if the range is to be long enough, and that, in America, for this very reason, the modern tyrant of privilege, the capitalist, is a more insidious foe to the democratic Press. But every new improvement, every fresh invention for diminishing the barriers of speech is a weapon which the capitalist himself is forging against his own privilege.

In Great Britain and in America the theory of

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government, as based upon the will of the people, is established ; and in any organic nation, as the late Professor Seeley showed, government necessarily rests upon a government-making power residing within the people. But how to make a nation really into an organism, how to assert the will of the people without resort to the blind forces of revolution ? That at all times is the problem of democracy. But no theory of democracy ever becomes potent until democracy has in some faint measure begun to exist, until the nation has already begun to have an organic life. No constitutional theory of government by consent could become the accepted theory unless there had been already some manifestation of a wish to be consulted, unless there were already some latent consciousness of the power to grant or withhold consent. The French Revolution was an object-lesson to the world, for it showed that a whole nation of men, united by the common knowledge disseminated through print, could be brought to share the same ideas and simultaneously act upon them ; but they could only act violently, precipitately, blindly and destructively. The long-range language of democracy was in its infancy. The crowd had no aptitude for this difficult language. They could babble in unison, but they could not yet talk.

The constitution-makers, the theoretical democrats, hit upon the device of representative government as a means for constantly expressing the will of the people and avoiding the violence of revolution.

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But the representative system failed to provide *representatives*. The real democrats in any case wanted something more. They wanted not merely to be *represented* in the national government, but to *enter into the national life* as members of an organism; not to be *represented* in the nation, but to *be* the nation.

The modern State depends, not upon voters, who may be automata, but upon the power of prevailing and accepted ideas. An aristocratic State is a State in which aristocratic ideas prevail; a middle-class or a plutocratic State is a State in which the ideas of the middle-classes, or the plutocracy, are in the ascendant. Real power lies in the power of knowing what others can tell you, and of making your own voice heard. A real democracy is a nation in which the characteristic opinions and feelings of every type of citizen find adequate expression, a nation also in which all men have the faculty and the opportunity of listening to such expression. The only real democracy is an actively conscious and self-expressive community.

The Press is the mechanism of this self-expression, a mechanism which in itself is being constantly improved, but which cannot be profitably improved beyond the point at which the community has the faculty of using it. But if it is the instrument by which the ideas of the educated are expressed, it is also the instrument by which vague notions can be carried to the masses. Thus privi-

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lege, which has lost its old power of restraining the Press, has acquired, through capital, a new power of permeating it, of making it a vehicle for false notions and anti-social ideas.

Thus the age-long struggle of civilization has to-day entered upon an acute and dramatic phase. We may see the combatants actively engaged at this moment—the mass of the modern nation slowly, very slowly, seeking to educate itself, partly through the Press itself, so that it may acquire the very faculty necessary to a proper use of the Press ; and the old anti-social tyrant using this same weapon to blind and confuse the democracy, and confirm it in its ignorance.

We may be sure that when civilization begins to win the battle, a new enemy will spring up in another form, and the struggle will begin again. The nation, converted into a self-conscious organic unity, might find itself again confronted with an enemy from without ; it might even happen that what I have called the long-range speech, perfected for the purposes of a nation, might find itself impotent before a new, continental, or world-wide grouping of mankind ; in which case civilization would begin to grope again for a more powerful mechanism of speech, for the development of a world-language binding the whole human race into a single articulate organism.

But that is looking forward into a distant future. It is enough that we should confine ourselves to the present conflict, and should see that in the Press

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we have the mechanism for a nation-language, a mechanism as yet far from perfect, requiring also a human faculty for using it which is at present—so far as the masses are concerned—in its infancy. Men may look forward to the Utopian future of the Press ; they may picture it, as Mr. Donald has pictured it, as an infinitely improved and perfected mechanism for conveying news ; or they may look forward to it as a vehicle adjusted to a universally high intelligence. This, as I say, is the Utopian future. But now we may be content to compare it to the nervous system of a body which is almost paralysed in some of its members, where the nerves themselves are jerky and unsteady, and will not always fulfil their functions. The Press is the nervous system of the modern body-politic. It conducts the sensory impressions from the most distant members to the brain-cells at the centre, and from the brain it carries its instructions back again to the extremities. The modern nation is intricately strung together by the communicative processes of the Press, upon the collective action of which the conscious life of the nation depends. Every improvement within it, every extension of its influence to more members of the community, embodies the progressive ideal of the nation to become self-conscious, self-expressive, articulate.



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